



FUTURELAB EUROPE

EUROPE MUST ACT!

THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE EYES OF YOUNG
PEOPLE



EMPOWERING
YOUNG
VOICES

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The Refugee Crisis in the Eyes of Young People

For several years, Europe has witnessed people arriving on its shores after embarking on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea. The number of arrivals continues to grow, as does the number of casualties - despite the efforts of the EU and some national authorities, who have for years rescued boats packed with migrants and refugees. Increased media attention, the magnitude of recent shipwrecks in the Mediterranean and a spike in the number of people reaching the EU's southern borders from Europe's conflict-ridden neighbours have culminated to give the so-called refugee crisis a pan-European dimension. The crisis is now on the political agenda of every European country.

As people continue to reach our borders, the response in Europe has revealed multiple fault lines. Between some old and some new EU member states, with the former more prone to cooperate and accept asylum requests than the latter. Between EU Institutions and member states, with the EU trying to coordinate a collective response and some member states expressing concerns about their capacity to accommodate and integrate the newcomers. Between governments and their citizens, where many citizens have taken a clear stand against their governments' positions and spontaneously organised civic platforms to help newcomers.

In this compendium of articles, FutureLab Europe participants take a moment to reflect on the refugee crisis from their own perspective. Citizens of the Western Balkans, and of Southern, Northern and Eastern EU Member States look at the debate in their own countries, drawing on their personal experiences and values. FutureLabber **Darija Maric**, a Bosnian and Serbian national, tells us about Serbia's welcoming attitude towards refugees, remembering her own powerful experience of fleeing Bosnia during the Balkan wars. **Srdjan Hercigonja** from Serbia, criticises the building of walls in the middle of Europe and suggests four concrete policy measures to solve the current crisis. **Maria Alette Abdli**, a Norwegian living in Lebanon, reconsiders the Norwegian debate through the eyes of a Syrian family she met on the streets of Amman. **Adnan Rahimic** from Bosnia-Herzegovina warns of the danger that Europe closes itself off, becoming a hostage of its own fears and losing its core values. Finn **Elias Vartio** criticises the Dublin Regulation and calls for a reconstruction of 'Fortress Europe', following more humanitarian principles. **Doris Manu**, Romanian, argues that if Europe wants to find a solution to the current humanitarian emergency, it must look beyond its borders and broker peace agreements in Syria. Finally, Spanish FutureLabber **Jorge Fernandez Gomez** reflects on the poor handling of the refugee crisis by European elites and warns that such a mishandling could exasperate social tensions in countries heavily affected by the economic crisis.

ABOUT FUTURELAB EUROPE

Europe has to be a citizen project in order to succeed. It needs fresh ideas and innovative concepts as well as a strong supportive base from its younger generations. In order to enable FutureLab Europe to exist and develop, ten European Foundations, with the help of the Network of European Foundations and the European Policy Centre in Brussels, joined forces. They are assembling experiences, resources and – most of all – their outstanding Alumni. The programme currently has 85 participants coming from 28 countries – EU countries as well as non-EU countries.

FutureLab Europe is a PPROJECT OF THE European Alliance for Democratic citizenship, affiliated to the Network of European Foundations and initiated by the Koerber Foundation. It is operated by the European Polciempowers young voices mainly on the topics of democracy and participation, equal opportunities on the labour market, and European identity. Participants of FutureLab Europe develop their own ideas and positions on matters of European relevance and take responsibility and actions in order to help build the Europe of the future. They share their young perspective on Europe through their blogs, in public debates and through their individual projects.

www.futurelabeurope.eu

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THE FACE OF EUROPE TODAY – IS IT HIDDEN IN THE TURKISH SAND?

by Darija Maric

Belgrade, September 2015 – I am sure we all saw the photo that made our hearts sink – a little boy, lying in the sand, face down. It is a photo of a toddler, a Syrian refugee, who was found dead somewhere on the Turkish coast. And I am sure that when we saw the photo, we all had the same thought: how horrible it is. How devastating and inexcusable. And how painstakingly tragic.

The refugee crisis that is going on hit Europe like a hurricane. But was it really unexpected? Or were there alarms going off that no one was paying attention to?

Although these questions might – and should – be debated, this time the focus will be on the way Europe as a whole has responded to the ever growing number of refugees trying to reach first its shores and then some of the Western, more economically developed countries. We can see their faces on the television, in the newspapers but also on our streets. Hungry, desperate, yet hopeful and determined men, women and children. Struggling for a chance to be given a better life and any kind of future – which is more than they have in the countries they come from.

At the European Leaders Summit in Brussels in June 2015, it was very clear that there is a strong division between the European countries when it comes to this particular issue. Angela Merkel described this as “the biggest challenge she has seen in European affairs in her time as chancellor”.

Expressing his frustration with the voluntary scheme they’ve eventually agreed on, which meant accepting 60.000 refugees in total, but excluding Hungary and Bulgaria from it, the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker described the plan reached at the Summit as one of “modest ambition”. Surprised by the economic arguments raised by the opponents of the voluntary scheme, the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi commented that *“if we think Europe is only about budgets, it is not the Europe we thought of in 1957 in Rome”*.

As the situation escalated, the responses of countries to the crisis varied. In the UK the Prime Minister referred to thousands of refugees trying to cross the English Channel from Calais as a “swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life”. He went on to state that since many of them are economic migrants rather than asylum seekers fleeing conflict and persecution, they cannot be allowed to “break in” to the UK. When we add the fact that The Royal Navy ship sent to join a Europe-wide mission to tackle the Mediterranean migrant crisis has not rescued a single person since its deployment to it, as well as the comments made by the Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond about the Britain needing to protect itself from “marauding migrants”, we can conclude that the UK took a firm stand against receiving any more immigrants and refugees. Similar rhetoric could be heard from

senior politicians from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland and Slovakia.

On the other hand, Germany has been a polar opposite to the UK when it comes to this particular issue. Not only has it accepted the most refugees – almost 800.000 by the end of 2015, it has also effectively opened its doors to any Syrian refugees that wish to claim asylum there by suspending the Dublin protocol for Syrians, which requires that refugees seek asylum in the first European country in which they arrive. The country's federal ministry of interior confirmed that once the asylum application is accepted, persons granted asylum or refugee status receive a temporary residence permit and are given the same status as Germans within the social insurance system. This entitles them to [several benefits](#), including social welfare, child benefits, child-raising benefits, integration allowances and language courses as well as other forms of integration assistance. Germany's approach is supported by Italy and France, with the three countries' interior ministries making a [joint statement](#) that “the current refugee crisis is putting the European Union to a historic test” and that “Europe must protect refugees in need of protection in a humane way, regardless of which EU country they arrive in.”

When it comes to my country of Serbia, both the people and the Government have shown a lot of compassion towards the refugees coming mainly from Syria, but also from other conflict areas such as Iraq or Afghanistan. While the neighbouring Hungary has started to build a 4 meter high and 175 km long wall on the border with our country in order to, in the [words](#) of their foreign minister, “defend Hungary and the Hungarian people from the immigration pressure”, Serbia has received around [90.000 of refugees](#) since the beginning of the year. However, it is a transit country and according to the official data, most of the migrants

do not plan or want to stay in Serbia, but want to continue their way to Hungary and from there to Western or Northern Europe. This is probably due to the fact the economic situation of the country is hard, living standards are low in comparison to the majority of other European countries and we are still not a member state of the European Union, although we do have a candidate status.

Although this situation affects many people on different levels, it also affects me on a personal level. When war broke out in Yugoslavia in 1992, my family was one of the many who fled their home in Bosnia with a couple of suitcases and a pack of baby diapers (my brothers were 2 at the time). Although I was very young, I do remember that particular night. I remember my parents whispering not to wake us up, because we were sleeping (or supposed to be) on the back seat. I remember that the atmosphere was oddly tense, and how I felt that my parents were strangely

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nervous. I still distinctively remember that I felt afraid, although I did not understand why I felt that way – there was something in the silence, the night, the empty roads and the low, desultory voice of my parents. And I remember the long sigh when we approached the border to Serbia. And the anticipation in the air which was so strong you

could almost touch it. And the relief and smile on my mother's face when we managed to cross the border. A couple of hours later all the borders were closed. If we had arrived only a few hours later, there would be no way out from the country which was already starting to count the dead.

But there is something I hadn't remembered that my father told me about. It happened on dawn the following day, when I was already tired and sleeping. I guess I was feeling that everything was all right and that the danger has passed. However, as my Dad recalls, both of my brothers were wide awake and were making as much noise as two

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Europe will definitely lose its face,
for good.***

babies can make. My family car, a red Volkswagen Golf 2 (the most popular and beloved car in that time in old Yugoslavia) stopped at the gas station. My Dad went out to refill the fuel tank when a man walked out from a car that came to the station at the same time as we did, only from the opposite direction. He approached my Dad, looked at our car, glanced at the woman sitting on the passenger seat and the children's heads on the back seat and afterwards gave a long look at the registration plate. Then he asked in a low yet determined voice: "Do you have anywhere to go?"

My Dad nodded. He had an aunt in Belgrade, which was where we were heading to. After hearing that, they shook hands and the man drove away. But even after all these years, my Dad never forgot his face, or the question he asked.

That was the face of Europe more than twenty years ago. Today, imagine Europe was that man in the car who stopped at the gas station and noticed a family in a car with a registration plate from a country in which there was a war raging. Would he come and ask if those people have anywhere to go? Would he offer to help? Or would that very man representing today's Europe just drive away, not really caring about other people's misfortune and suffering?

There are many economic, political, sociological and cultural issues that make the migration problem more difficult and complex than one might think at first. But it should be a basic human instinct to offer a helping hand to the ones in need. And then, when they have their basic needs met, we as Europeans should work jointly on a long term solution that could bring this crisis to an end. Compassionate, caring, yet decisive and dedicated to solving the problems – that would be the face of Europe we could show the world and be proud of.

Once we lose our humanity, Europe will definitely lose its face, for good.



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WALLS – NEW INTEGRAL PART OF THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

by Srdjan Hercigonja

Belgrade, September 2015 – Several months ago, when Hungary announced it was going to build a wall along the border with Serbia, I realised that the consequences of such an act could be very serious. When I say ‘serious consequences’, I am not referring to the Hungarian-Serbian relations (between an EU member state and an EU candidate state), but to the European identity itself. Truly horrific images coming in every day from the Hungarian-Serbian border, and from other countries on the so-called Balkan refugee route (Greece-Macedonia, and now Croatia) are the result of policies that favour walls instead of freedom of movement, repression instead of solidarity. In the end, the consequences of these policies may be catastrophic for Europe, although this claim may be perceived as exaggerated at this moment. All of ‘us’ Europeans should ask ourselves: *How did we come to a situation where an influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees into Europe results in a humanitarian crisis? What should we do in order to prevent the crisis from turning into a catastrophe?*

In September 2015, hundreds of desperate people began to walk on foot on one of the major highways in Central Europe because they were forbidden to take the train in Budapest. The image of a huge column of people walking along a European highway, with cars passing by and refugees waving an EU flag will probably be published in history books in the future. How

could we allow hundreds of people who already walked and travelled thousands of kilometres from their homes to be forced to do something like that? These images of thousands of people suffering in the middle of Europe has become an integral part of the European identity. It’s up to us to decide what goals we have, and what values we will chose. The answers to these questions and the actions we take will reshape our common identity. We also have to pose a serious question: what did we do wrong? And what should we do to prevent these situations from happening again?

All of us who are living in the countries on the transit route are witnessing an unprecedented crisis that Europe has not experienced since the end of World War II. I live in a former Yugoslav country, so I know very well what a refugee crisis means: hundreds of thousands of people were expelled from their homes during the brutal

I assumed that the enormous number of refugees from the Middle East would be something I could psychologically handle using my personal experience with victims of the 1990s wars. However, this refugee crisis is something different.

Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. As someone who has been actively involved in transitional justice issues in the counties of former Yugoslavia, I assumed that the enormous number of refugees from the Middle East would be something I could psychologically handle using my personal experience with victims of the 1990s wars. However, this refugee crisis is something different. These people, these families with children, old people, men and women, have experienced a horrific journey from their homes to Serbia. More than 120.000 refugees have passed through Belgrade. They usually spend one or two days sleeping in parks near the Belgrade bus and train station, before they continue their journey north, to Hungary. Several times I went to these parks. I spoke with dozens of people, the majority of them coming from Syria. Some of the experiences from the Syrian civil war they shared with me are simply horrid, particularly the ones of those who left the ISIS-controlled territories. Almost all of them want to go to Germany, and they pay the smugglers huge amounts of money to reach Hungary and Austria.

Although there are a number of organisations providing help, it is not enough. As I am writing this blog, hundreds of people are sleeping in the open air in Belgrade, with volunteers begging Belgrade residents to provide warm clothes and blankets.

The Dublin regulations have collapsed. The European Union needs to adopt new, coherent policies to effectively address the current situation. The shame and blame game between EU member states should be avoided, because it could lead to further fragmentation of the integrated EU immigration policies, and to even more divisions between the EU member states, who are already deeply split over the proposed quota system. EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe especially refuse to accept a mandatory scheme.

These divisions, as well as the often shameful images of the treatment of the refugees will weaken the EU's soft power, which can lead to a marginalised position of the EU in international relations. Therefore, one of the causes of the current refugee crisis is to be found in the lacking and dysfunctional Common Foreign and Security Policy.

I would normally avoid criticizing the policies of some of the EU member states, but the current refugee crisis fragmented the European public space so much, that I feel compelled to speak up. The Visegrad group, Denmark, Romania, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom, and their reluctance to assist in this pan-European crisis may damage not only the EU's ability to solve the current crisis, but the European identity itself. The Hungarian government in particular should be warned that it has to respect all the UN conventions concerning refugees and human rights, as well as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as Chancellor Merkel already did earlier.

At this moment, the European Union must act decisively, effectively and rapidly. It has to:

- provide help to those member states that are most affected by the refugee crisis;
- give humanitarian aid to the EU candidate states (particularly those from the Western Balkans), in order to cope with the crisis;
- develop mechanisms that monitor the human rights issues in those member states that are most affected by the refugee crisis (including mechanisms that would sanction human rights abuses);
- re-negotiate a new agreement that would replace (or improve) the Dublin regulation.

As walls and fences and wires with razors have been erected in the middle of Europe, no one

actually knows what the current crisis might bring. When Hungary adopted new strict anti-immigration laws, thousands of refugees were trapped in the Western Balkans, and they have already started to look for alternative routes through Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia

and other countries. Therefore, we should ask ourselves: do we really want walls in the middle of Europe in 2015? Is that the solution to the refugee crisis? I believe it is not, and as the UN agencies warn, these policies may only provoke further chaotic situations, with terrible consequences.



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PRICING THE LIVES

OF INDIVIDUALS

by **Maria Alette Abdli**¹

Amman, July 2015 – Should we accept them? Welcome them? Can we afford them?

Millions of Syrians have fled war in the past few years – and everyday more people manage to cross the border, escaping violence and fear in their home country. In Norway, as in other European countries, there has been a heated debate about whether or not a helping hand in the form of asylum should be offered to these refugees. Sometimes, the debate got so heated that we forget who we are talking about: individuals. In the dusty streets of Amman, a family gave a face to the debate.

I have seen them many times, the three young sisters and their mother, sitting on a dirty piece of cardboard in the streets of Abdoun, Amman's richest neighbourhood. Sometimes they are sleeping in the heat (30-40C in the summer), sometimes they are playing with some old toys that random people have left them – and sometimes they are just sitting there. Hour after hour.

They are always sitting there when I pass in a taxi on my way home from the internship I am doing in Amman. Like most people, I just pass them,

thinking how sad it is to see these young lives being confined to a cardboard plate.

Back in my home country, Norway, these three girls, their mother and the several million other Syrians in the same situation, have been high on the agenda of the different political parties.

Seven million Syrians are internally displaced, and about four million have fled the country. Many of them have sought refuge in the neighbouring countries; Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan – where I live at the moment.

The UN has asked their member states for help placing some of them. Should we? Can we? Isn't it too expensive?

These are the questions that Norwegian politicians have been fiercely debating these past few months. Should Norway accept more Syrian refugees than the already planned UN quotas?

Whereas some suggested 10,000 Syrian refugees as a minimum, others preferred the number to be zero. With a majority in the parliament – not including the government – in favour of accepting 10,000 refugees, tensions rose fast. Finally, the politicians reached a consensus and agreed to accept 8000 Syrian refugees over the next three

¹ This article was published on sueddeutsche.de in the framework of FutureLab Europe's cooperation with Sueddeutsche.de

years. However, both the Socialist Left Party and the Progress Party (the latter a government party) left the discussion, the former because they thought the number was too low, the latter because they considered it too high.

The question has sparked a heated debate amongst Norwegians, and while many believe this is the least a wealthy country like Norway can do, others point to the extra bills related to welcoming these refugees, as well as practical issues such as placement and integration. The main argument for those that oppose accepting more refugees, is that the money spent in Norway could have helped more people in Syria's neighbouring countries, where the majority of the refugees are currently living.

Different calculations are made, suggesting that for the price of taking in 8000-10,000 refugees, several hundreds of thousands (some say maybe as many as one million) could have been helped in the surrounding countries, where the needs are enormous.

Whereas some suggested that this was just an excuse to argue that more immigration to Norway

What are their chances of building a life in Lebanon? A whole generation of children is not only missing out on their childhood, but also on their chances to make a future for themselves through education.

is a bad idea, there is no doubt that millions of Syrians have become refugees and are currently struggling to make ends meet.

Like this family that I met here in Amman. As I sat down to listen to their story, I asked myself what

they would have preferred. 8000 Syrians in Norway, or helping several hundreds of thousands in need in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey?

This family fled from Syria in the early months of the war. They have already been refugees for years now. Assisting them here in Amman would certainly help them in meeting their basic needs: food, clean water and shelter. The mother would not have to sit outside in 30C and more, every day hoping for someone to pass by with chips, chocolate, or if they are really 'lucky' – a fully prepared meal, so that she can feed her children. With millions of refugees, many are in their situation. They have less than nothing. What would mean the most to them? If they are not among the 8000 going to Norway, they certainly would have benefitted from the aid.

On the other hand: aid is important, but then what?

What are their chances of building a life here? There are no signs the crisis in Syria is going to end any time soon, and in the meantime, life is put on hold for millions of people. A whole generation of children is not only missing out on their childhood, but also on their chances to make a future for themselves through education.

Unless aiding them in the surrounding countries means providing them with long-term opportunities for making a life in the future, they will be caught in a vicious circle. To what extent would the amounts of money that could have gone to the surrounding areas actually have resulted in the creation of long-term opportunities for these refugees? Education at all levels? Would they have been used to cover only the most basic, urgent needs? What opportunities do they have in their current host countries?

Jordan, for example, hosts more than 600.000 registered refugees (unofficial reports suggest the

double). Whereas the official stance of the government is that Jordan is a safe haven for the refugees, some of the most burdened host communities are increasingly putting limits on their hospitality.

Especially in the north of Jordan, the host communities are under immense pressure. The large influx of refugees leads to increasing housing prices, more challenges to already challenged services such as waste management and education, and more competition for jobs – just to mention a few. Although the Jordanian hospitality is great, it is not boundless. And amongst the poorer population, some of those with little are getting tired of sharing with those having even less.

Many of the refugees live in dire conditions in refugee camps, whereas others try to make a life for themselves in Jordanian cities. The family sitting next to my house are among them. Having lived in the Zaatari Camp, the father wanted to work in Amman and brought his whole family. Sometimes he finds work, but most of the time, his search is in vain. Thus the mother and the three

children sit there on their small cardboard plate, waiting for charity.

Listening to the mother as she described how hard it is to see her children suffer, how hard it is to get enough food – and worst of all, wait while her daughters lose their childhood, my thoughts wander back to Norway and the debate, which has come to an official conclusion. 8000 Syrians will come to Norway. Maybe this family, with the two little blond, green-eyed girls and their dark-haired big sister will come to Norway and start a new life there?

Probably not. They will be part of the statistics of those staying in host communities. In addition to the 8000 Syrian refugees that will come to Norway, my country still provides aid to the neighbouring countries, and a majority of politicians has agreed to increase the financial aid. But when I see this family in front of me, when I see the smiles of these little girls as I take a photo of them and show them the result, I regret that no matter what we do, it will not be enough. Individuals, like these three sisters, will still be left on their own.



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HISTORICAL CIRCLE OF BEING –

THE REFUGEE QUESTION

by **Adnan Rahimić**

Sarajevo, 14 September 2015 – Looking at the ongoing refugee crisis, it's time for some history lessons. This is a story that happened a long, long time ago, even before our parents were born. Long forgotten, or at least not mentioned enough to remind us that history is a circle, and that many events are only repeating themselves.

Many historians will remember the Évian Conference that was initiated by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1938. The conference gathered many national delegations and organisations in order to respond to the problem of the increasing numbers of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe – and to obtain commitments from the invited nations to accept more refugees. At the same time, the majority of the Jewish population stood in long lines in front of embassies and consulates, in the “no-man’s-lands” between the borders, in bus and train stations, with their only belongings stuffed in one or two bags. With no ports willing to accept them, they were doomed to travel on “haunted ships”. Hundreds of thousands of desperate people tried to escape humiliation, discrimination, hate and violence, all because their God had a different name.

The conference was a failure, while the Nazi representatives were satisfied: their belief that “no one wants the Jews” was apparently shared across the world, more so than they thought. The United States and many European countries

refused to accept more refugees, and the Jews had no escape and were ultimately subjected to what was to be known as Hitler’s “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”.

Today, we are faced with a similar scenario. Today’s refugee crisis has revealed the contradictions in the European principles of ‘democratisation and civilisation’. Hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing war-torn countries and risk their lives to reach Europe. But the way the European Union is dealing with it shows serious flaws in EU governance: each member state applies different migration policies, in order to protect itself.

Opening the borders of the European Union to refugees is humane and democratic, European leaders are afraid that this might trigger discontent among many European citizens, even though opening up the borders could be beneficial in the long run – not to mention that it’s the right thing to do. The borders remain closed, and the mistakes that were made 80 years ago are repeated once again. The result of it: the Mediterranean has become the grave of refugees.

Some positive measures have been taken: refugee’s entrance quotas were established; funds were established to help the refugees with the determined costs of stay and travel, with the inevitable battle between national governments about who will get more money. But

I cannot help but wonder: is this money being spent on the refugees' needs, or is it invested in something else, like building walls, in order to protect themselves from what, apparently, are different values, customs and beliefs? These are the same walls that were destroyed when the European Community was born back in the 1950s, when European leaders still dreamed of creating a more democratic, open and prosperous region.

If the European Union decides to keep its borders closed and make it a “home” where no guests are welcome, its society will become a hostage of the current politics, a place where some members might at some point become undesirable.

The European Union is a magnificent project of peace and democracy, but at the same time, its citizens must face the harsh truth that the same Europe was also – and still is – a breeding ground for Nazism, racism and nationalism, and that some of the bloodiest massacres in the near and more distant past took place within its own borders.

Sadly, many recent actions, such as protests across Europe against migrants and refugees, and the building of walls have uncovered latent racism and xenophobia in many European political cultures.

A solution to Europe's refugee crisis requires the adoption of a harmonised EU refugee /migration policy that takes into account the needs of refugees and the needs of its member states, as well as an active foreign policy that can stabilise the countries and the regions from where refugees flee. But it seems EU leaders are more focused on economic and trade policies and thus the reluctance of national governments to adopt a harmonised EU immigration policy is implicitly condoned.

If the European Union decides to keep its borders closed and make it a “home” where no guests are welcome, its society will become a hostage of the current politics, a place where some members might at some point become *undesirable*, maybe even ending up in the same situation as the refugees from today's war-torn countries: being forced to knock on others' doors and seek help. Because, as we learned before: history does repeat itself.



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RECONCEPTUALISING

FORTRESS EUROPE

by Elias Vartio

Helsinki, 29 September 2015 – For a long time, ‘Fortress Europe’ has been a well-deserved pejorative term for the hard-line migration policies of the EU and the European countries. The recipe has been simple: keep the world outside and the wealth inside. Even the much-talked about globalisation and freedom of movement has been largely unilateral – with a western passport you can get anywhere, with a southern one you get nowhere.

While migration policies have had clear flaws and are deserving of criticism for many of their questionable peculiarities (e.g. [collaboration with Gaddafi](#) in order to keep undesired migrants in Africa, just to name one), there is also a bright side to it. Europe is still a fortress. The EU can, without much argument, be called the most successful peace project in modern history. While the world is going crazy, the European Union is still relatively calm and stable. Our crisis is not war and destruction; our crisis is the need to protect a few million displaced people and find more durable solutions for how we run our economies and societies. In any case, at the moment the road to hell from Europe is still very, very long and the fortress very, very peaceful.

If Europe then needs to reinvent its Fortress, what are its most obvious flaws and how could these be addressed? Well, for one, in the last few decades Europe has appeared to mostly build higher walls and eliminate as many ways into the Fort as possible – this way it has presumably been easier

to defend. Regardless of the intentions, we are now in a situation where there is enormous pressure due to war, poverty and persecution for people to find a safer and better life in Europe, and yet most of the legal pathways – such as study permits, residence permits, working visas and the like – have been made unavailable. The contrast of this reality to that of the situation during the Cold War is stark. At that time, Sweden argued that the best cooperation support they could give a third world country was offering their young students jobs.

Now, as the legal paths to Europe have been largely blocked, the markets are ripe with opportunities for smugglers and organised crime. According to a report by the German paper [Der Spiegel](#) a ride on a rubber duck (i.e. inflatable boat) across the perilous sea costs 1.000 USD; a yacht trip 3.000 USD and if you’re loaded with cash, then you might afford a flight to Frankfurt with false papers for the bargain price of 15.000 dollars. Meanwhile, our fellow Europeans can buy a round trip to Ethiopia, Egypt or Lebanon for only some

The European Council Directive 2001/51/EC has just removed refugees from the pool of potential customers for commercial airlines and into the hands of human smugglers.

300 – 400 euros. Ironic, huh? – Definitely. Fair? – Not so much. Lucrative? Absolutely, if you're into the profitable business of human trafficking and smuggling. And much of this is thanks to European policies and regulations, such as the European Council Directive [2001/51/EC](#) concerning the combating of illegal immigration on commercial carriers.

The above mentioned Directive lays the framework for sanctions for commercial carriers, in case they are found to transport persons lacking the sufficient paperwork – i.e. travelling documents and visas for entry to the Schengen area. The Directive does contain a paragraph stating that it is without prejudice to the obligations of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951. However, in practice airlines have been in no position to evaluate such claims and are unlikely to be willing to take such economic risks, including *inter alia* the duty to transport the person back to the starting point. Ironically, this has just removed most of the refugees from the pool of potential customers for commercial airlines and into the hands of human smugglers.

There is some change occurring though. A Swedish initiative named [Refugee Air](#) aims to underwrite the risks concerning transportation of refugees to Europe with the aim of avoiding perilous sea journeys. . In Finland, Amnesty International among others is lobbying for the introduction – or rather the greater use of – humanitarian visas. Even if EU member states place a hefty fee on the visas needed by these vulnerable people, it'd still be intellectually more fair and sensible to do so, rather than just play into the hands of organised crime as is currently happening. Another [proposal](#) demands that the EU set up a centre on the border of Turkey and Syria, where asylum applications could be processed on the spot, hence facilitating another more lawful and safe entry to Europe. In

other words, much could be done in order to ease the journey of those needing the protection inside the safe haven of Fortress Europe.

This safe haven, our beloved bubble, was created largely through a system where economic incentives fostered peaceful relations and cooperation across the borders. It appears strikingly odd that the EU now seems to fail to use these very same strengths in its migration and refugee policies. Professor Paul Collier has [criticised](#) the European system of international protection and closing of legal pathways to Europe as being highly immoral. He argues that Europe has previously been responsible for saving drowning migrants, then it should also be held equally responsible for creating and maintaining the current system where desperate individuals are lured to the perilous sea in hope of better lives. As a solution to this, he suggests improvements and investments to the refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon that are currently bearing the lion's share of the Syrian refugee crisis. Additionally, if there were less destitution and more hope and prospects of a better future in the refugee camps, then less people would be inclined to seek better futures in Europe. One way of achieving this would be by building up light industries next to the

There is still plenty of room for newcomers Europe's trenches and walls and European political decision makers need to make it clear in concrete deeds that there is hope beyond the wall.

refugee camps and then including this in the sphere of European free trade, thus promoting at least a bit of prosperity and stability in Middle-East.

All in all, Europe can't be directly blamed for the ongoing devastating civil war in Syria. (Or perhaps it can, but that's [another story](#)). However, just locking oneself in the bastion is not very suitable for someone desiring to be the champion of peace, justice and what-not. The Europe that the world wishes to see is still that which is peaceful, stable

and prosperous. However, there is still plenty of room for newcomers even inside these trenches and walls. And the political decision makers of Europe need to make it clear – not only in words but first and foremost in concrete deeds – that there is hope beyond the wall, even now when the winter is clearly coming.



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THE REFUGEE CRISIS:

ZOOMING IN AND OUT

by Doris Manu

Brussels, 1 September 2015 – Refugees are making the headlines every day, their stories reach us more or less directly and a recent opinion poll shows that Europeans see immigration as one of the major challenges the EU is facing at the moment. There are reasons to worry more and more about this issue.

Not so long ago, when I was regularly touring the Western Balkans, having a group of Syrians on the bus from Skopje to Belgrade would have been as probable as having a group of aliens on there. This is not the case anymore. The common route refugees are taking to escape the war in Syria and reach Central Europe is Greece-Macedonia-Serbia-Hungary. Hundreds of Syrian people board the buses and trains going from Skopje to Belgrade these days. On their journey to safety, many of them stop to get some sleep and plan the rest of the trip in the park next to the Belgrade bus station. A Serbian friend recently told a story

about being in this bus station and meeting a Syrian family who was trying to reach the border with Hungary – they wanted to buy a ticket but the cashier did not speak any English and my friend had to translate. He listened to their story and found out they would spend the night in the park as no hotel wanted to take them in because they had no identity cards.

Many more people are sleeping in the open air on the other side of our continent, in Calais. In desperate attempts to reach the UK territory, they try to cross the Channel, jumping over the fences again and again during the night and hiding on Eurotunnel trains. Those who don't succeed wait longer in the camp known as 'The Jungle' of Calais.

Dramatic stories of refugees keep appearing in the newspapers and in the UNHCR newsletter, but do not seem to reach the EU leaders, who seem to be more preoccupied with the numbers than with the people. After the Commission's proposal to relocate 40.000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other EU countries, discontent appeared among heads of state and government. Germany and France called for further negotiations, Spain rejected the Commission's proposal altogether, and Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic refused to support a mandatory system and wanted the countries to participate on a voluntarily basis instead. Other countries supported the deal, on the condition that they would get paid for each refugee they would take in

If anyone is genuinely interested in finding a solution to the refugee crisis, the needs of those who already made it to Europe need to be addressed, while the international community should do more to build peace and stability around the world.

– Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia were offered 6000 euros per refugee. There are also measures that aim to prevent refugees from reaching their destination of choice: EU leaders agreed to establish a mission that would “identify, capture and destroy vessels before they are used by traffickers” and Hungary is erecting a wall along the border with Serbia to prevent irregular crossing onto its territory.

It is as if EU countries do not look beyond their borders. Syria is at war for many years now and, according to the UNHCR, Syrians are the biggest refugee population from a single conflict in a generation. In Yemen a ruthless war has been raging for several months and people don't have access to food or medicine. In many other

countries, such as Libya and Eritrea, human rights abuses are the rule and not the exception.

If anyone is genuinely interested in finding a solution to the refugee crisis, the needs of those who already made it to Europe need to be addressed, while the international community should do more to build peace and stability around the world. Ending the ongoing brutal conflicts would also end the suffering and insecurity, and so many people would not be forced to flee. Peace-making is possible and we have seen it recently. Deals that seemed impossible just a few years ago were concluded very recently: the Belgrade-Pristina agreement, and the nuclear deal with Iran just a few weeks ago. Why not have Syria next on the agenda of peace talks?



Doris Manu (Romania) is an alumna of the College of Europe – Bruges and holds a Master's Degree in South-Eastern European Studies from the University of Belgrade as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Bucharest. She has completed several traineeships in Romania, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia.

REFUGEE CRISIS.

DIFFERENT 'EUROPES' AND FEW REGRETS

by Jorge Fernandez Gomez

Madrid, September 2015 – Recently, a famous Spanish writer produced an article in which he considered that it took a photo of a dead child on a beach to initiate policy responses to the tragic events taking place on Europe's borders. He gave a scathing criticism of politicians, asking if the absence of photos of dead children is worrying as it could make our leaders forget the problem without having found a proper solution. Those words made me think not only about the magnitude of the situation, but also about the kind of responses member states are giving to this, as if it were a new problem that has appeared all of a sudden.

According to the Dublin Regulation, the country responsible for processing and registering refugees arriving in the EU is the member state through which the refugees first entered the territory of the EU. In practical terms, this means southern member states. Exceptionally, some countries have decided to welcome refugees, but not before hesitating and adjusting as much as possible, as if there was some kind of auction over the number of people they are going to help.

I'm surprised by the hypocrisy of this. In my 21 years of living in Spain, there has been no month in which I have not seen on the news the arrival of boats crowded with hundreds of migrants – including dozens dead – to the coast. In that time, I have never heard news of any response from any member state.

I am also fully aware that irregular migration and the current refugee crisis are distinct, but in terms of political and socio-economic responses, as well as humanitarian impact, they both can be considered the same thing. It seems to be that only now, as the crisis has a much more globally visible face, that it's time to lead by example...

My criticism is not only limited to responses at the European level, but also to the domestic level, where there is a lack of legislation as well. This has permitted most political parties to use the difficulty of managing the massive arrival of people as a political weapon to modify public opinion in recent years.

Fortunately, beyond the difficulties of management, in Spain there haven't been the same worrying attitudes of rejection as in some other European countries. I am referring to the rise of nationalism; the rejection of cultural and religious minorities; and the exploitation of the situation by extremist ideologies trying to get 'political credit' by flying the flag of hatred. Only watching the news is enough to notice violence, hate, closed borders, the inhumane treatment of refugees, entire families displaced in precarious conditions, mafias taking advantage of the situation... and journalists tripping fathers with their sons.

I can understand the difficulty of reaching a consensus on the distribution of people; and that not all the countries have the same absorption capability; and that the distribution has to respond

A bad management of the refugee crisis could lead to social repudiation as because of the economic crisis, many Europeans are still experiencing difficulties.

to a certain number of variables such as GDP, unemployment rate or availability of resources. However, the accommodation, food, legal advice and humane treatment can't wait. These people need to rebuild their lives, and it has to be guaranteed that they are going to be helped, and that they won't be left to roam our streets or find themselves in even worse situations. Integration has to be very well designed. Bad management could lead to social repudiation. Because of the economic crisis, many people are still having difficulties. They could claim they feel disregarded while they see refugees are being given a new life,

as some critical voices are saying nowadays. Anyway, this doesn't mean we can look away and dispense with humanity; refugees are still wandering through our borders. They have left everything in their country to escape from certain death.

It is self-evident that this situation needs to be turned around, and that this can only happen through solidarity between EU members. Maybe the EU should focus more on tackling the problem at its source, by taking some kind of military action in Syria, or perhaps member states need to consider their fundamental relationship with international institutions, and entrust the EU with the instruments to solve the problem. What is clear is that we are at the early stages of considering these fundamental questions, and that both the process and this crisis are likely to continue.



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