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TEPSA – Trans European Policy Studies Association

PONT Working Europe I seminar on EU Asylum and Migration policies

4-8 April 2016

Fondation Universitaire, Brussels

Report

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Preface

In the framework of the *Professional Training on EU Affairs* – PONT project, co-funded by the ERASMUS+/Jean Monnet Programme, TEPSA organized a five-day seminar on *EU Asylum and Migration policies* in Brussels on 4-8 April 2016. Twenty excellent Master’s students from diverse geographical and disciplinary backgrounds were selected from more than 100 high-calibre applicants. The seminar offered a unique opportunity to the participants to gain first-hand insights, right in the heart of EU policy-making, into the political dynamics shaping EU asylum and migration policies and the EU’s response to the recent migration challenge.

The PONT seminar participants had an opportunity to visit and meet practitioners from the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU and Frontex – the EU border management agency. Experts from influential Brussels-based NGOs and think-tanks, namely the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) discussed with the seminar participants the legal aspects of recent EU asylum policy changes and the EU’s response to the refugee crisis, including the cooperation with third countries and the role of funding. At the end of each day, participants discussed and evaluated the meetings with the leader of the seminar, Prof Jaap W. de Zwaan, Secretary General of TEPSA and Emeritus Professor of European Union Law at Erasmus University Rotterdam, comparing their new findings with available academic literature and their own preparatory essays.

On the last day of the seminar, students had the opportunity to apply the theoretical and practical insights they gained during the week in a simulation game of European Council negotiations on the hypothetical scenario of large numbers of migrants arriving to Europe from Sub-Saharan Africa. Students had no difficulty in getting into their respective roles as representatives of Member States and European institutions. Based on the excellent diplomatic efforts of the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, the European Council adopted meaningful conclusions only after three hours of negotiations!

TEPSA wishes the PONT seminar participants a good continuation of their studies and research and a good start of their professional careers!





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Programme

Programme

Working Europe I seminar- *EU Asylum and Migration policies* 4-8 April 2016, Brussels

Monday 4 April 2016

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels, Room Francqui

- 14:00 - 16:00 Opening and introduction to the seminar: Latest state of play on the refugee crisis and EU asylum and migration policies
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan**
- 16:30 - 18:00 Question and Answer session on EU asylum and migration policies based on participants' preparatory assignment
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan**

Tuesday 5 April 2016

- 09:30 - 11:00 **Sylvie Guillaume**, Vice-President of the European Parliament (S&D Group, France):
"Harmonization of the European asylum system"
Meeting point: European Parliament ex-Info point, on the esplanade before the Altiero Spinelli building
- 11:30 - 13:30 **Klemens H. Fischer**, Minister Plenipotentiary and Head of Department at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union: "The EU and the Current Global Security Challenges – Energy, Migration and Geopolitics"
Venue: Perm. Rep. of Austria to the EU, Avenue de Cortenbergh 30, 1040 Brussels
- 14:30 - 16:00 **Leonhard den Hertog**, Researcher, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS):
"EU's responses to the 'refugee crisis': cooperation with third countries and the role of funding"
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Room Francqui
- 16:30 - 18:00 Analysis and discussion in the group
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan**



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Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Room Francqui

Wednesday 6 April 2016

- 09:50 - 11:30 **Raoul Ueberecken**, Director for Home Affairs, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union: “Strengthening Schengen’s external border”
Venue: Council of the European Union, Justus Lipsius Building, Rue de la Loi 175, 1048 Brussels
- 12:00 - 13:30 **Amanda Taylor**, AIDA/EDAL Junior Legal Officer, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE): “Legal standards and relevant case law in the context of recent EU asylum policy changes”
Venue: ECRE, Rue Royale 146, 1st Floor, 1000 Brussels
- 14:45 - 16:00 **Elly Schlein**, Member of the European Parliament (S&D Group, Italy): “Reforming the Dublin System”
Meeting point: European Parliament ex-Info point, on the esplanade before the Altiero Spinelli building
- 16:30-17:45 Analysis and discussion in the group
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan**
Venue: Fundación Galicia Europa, Rue de la Loi 38, 1040 Brussels

Thursday 7 April 2016

- 08:45 - 10:30 **LIBE Committee meeting**, European Parliament
Meeting point: European Parliament ex-Info point, on the esplanade before the Altiero Spinelli building
- 10:45-12:30 Time to prepare the national positions for the simulation game (optional)
- 12:30 - 13:30 Lunch at Fondation Universitaire
- 13:30 - 15:00 **Peter David**, Assistant Policy Officer, European Commission, DG HOME, Unit C1 - Irregular Migration and Return Policy: “Migrant smuggling - what is the EU doing against this booming business?”
- Ruairi Topping**, Associate Liaison Officer, Frontex Brussels Office: “Frontex – European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the EU External Borders”
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Room D



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- 15:15 - 16:45 Analysis and discussion in the group
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan**
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Room D
- 17:00 - 18:00 Introduction to the simulation game: negotiations on EU migration or asylum
policy by **Prof. Johannes Pollak**
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Room D

Friday 8 April 2016

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels, Room Francqui

- 09:00 – 12:00 Simulation game on the European Council: negotiations on EU asylum policy
amidst the refugee crisis, with **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan and Prof. Michael Kaeding**
- 12:00 – 12:30 Lunch at Fondation Universitaire
- 12:30-14:00 Evaluation and individual feedback on the simulation game
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan and Prof. Michael Kaeding**
- 14:00 – 15:00 Final discussion and evaluation of the seminar
by **Prof. Jaap de Zwaan**



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Day-to-day report on the training

Monday, 4 April 2016: Opening and introduction to EU Migration and Asylum policies

The first day started by the introduction of the programme, the team and the participants. Prof Jaap de Zwaan, the academic coordinator of the seminar, gave an overview of the latest state of play on the refugee crisis and EU asylum and migration policies, followed by a questions and answers session, based, inter-alia, on participants' preparatory assignments. He focused on the European and International Law on Asylum and Migration (both legal and irregular), the application of the principle of *non-refoulement*, EURODAC, the EU definition of refugees and asylum-seekers, subsidiary protection and temporary protection, including an overview on the Dublin system. In the 'immigration' part, conditions of entry and residence were discussed. The recent migration crisis was also debated, in particular ways to manage the on-going refugee emergency, including the prevention of irregular migration, addressing urgent humanitarian needs, saving lives at sea, strengthening external borders, reinforcement of solidarity and responsibility (relocation and resettlement), providing legal avenues and the questions of return and readmission. EU-Turkey cooperation and the situation in European hotspots were also discussed.

Tuesday, 5 April 2016: EU response to the refugee emergency - external relations and the role of funding

Due to cancelled flights soon after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, MEP Guillaume had to cancel her participation in the event at the last minute. The day started with the visit to the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union.

Klemens H. Fischer, Minister Plenipotentiary and Head of Department at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union: "The EU and the Current Global Security Challenges – Energy, Migration and Geopolitics"

Rapporteur: Aideen Elliott, Maynooth University

Mr Fischer began by stating that the current crisis we are facing was in fact foreseeable. He discussed the connections between Member States reaching an agreement amongst the entire union, and the question of MS sovereignty. He went on to discuss the events of Summer 2015



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and the current situation in Turkey. He noted that Greece are building up their capacities but are facing a very difficult task of controlling a border of a state that is made up of so many islands.

Mr Fischer then opened his discussion on geopolitics with the following definition from Flint "Contemporary geopolitics identifies the sources, practices and representations that allow for the control of territory and the extraction of resources" (Flint 2012). He reminded us of the importance of energy and how this connects to crises, as suggested by the title of his session.

Mr Fischer demonstrated how it is important to recognise that foreign policy can be assessed from various perspectives and the picture may look different depending on from what geographical location we are looking. We discussed the Russian perspective, the US perspective, the Chinese perspective as well as the European perspective. Mr Fischer reflected on the scale of the atrocities of the war in Syria and the difficulties this presents. He identified what he called 'zones of crisis' around the globe, and potential repercussions for the EU. He then discussed the importance of energy in relation to geopolitics.

We moved on to discussing the European Union, its formation and identity, and whether there is a 'European identity'. For the generation of people who lived during the Second World War the EU was a peace project and for that reason held great importance. However since the fall of the Berlin Wall that aspect of the 'European narrative' has all but disappeared and we discussed whether another narrative had taken its place.

Questions from the group covered topics such as trust in EU institutions, the Arab Spring, the sovereignty of MS as inscribed in the Lisbon Treaty and how this relates to the EU handling of the current crisis. We also discussed the Mediterranean Union as a mechanism for addressing border crises, European identity and a narrative on the functions of the EU and how the EU has evolved since its creation.

Leonhard den Hertog, Researcher, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS): "EU's responses to the 'refugee crisis': cooperation with third countries and the role of funding"

Rapporteur: Camila Rios Armas, Sciences PO Paris

The session was structured in four main parts: a. why look at funding? b. EU funding initiatives in response to the 'refugee crisis' c. The roles of funding in times of crisis; d. The challenges of funding in times of crisis.



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A. Why look at funding?

According to Mr den Hertog, there is a lack of analysis on funding but it is important to look at it as it has a direct impact on managing the refugee crisis. The budgetary and legal measures in the context of the European Agenda on migration deserve attention.

Some of the key legal developments are: (1) amending budgets proposed and adopted in short time frames, and (2) implementing decisions and regulation adopted in international agreements.

Furthermore, the European Commission has included the budgetary and legal measures as one of the main topics of the European Agenda on Migration. In this sense, communication is key. For example, funding issues has been highlighted not only through the regular channels but also through public relations (PR) outputs. This reveals, beyond the legal framework, what the priorities are nowadays.

B. EU funding initiatives in response to the ‘refugee crisis’

In general there is a tendency of shift from development programs to crisis assistance. According to the numbers given, the European Union funds mobilized to the refugee crisis response are 6.4 bln. However, there is no clear indication over Member States contributions.

*Mr Den Hertog draws attention to the fact that the EU funding initiatives are not beyond budget ceilings, in other words, there is no real “new” funding in response to the refugee crisis. Mr Den Hertog also highlights some challenges, as the **double counting issue**: several of these announced budgets will be expended in PR projects two or three times.*

C. The roles of funding in times of crisis

According to Mr den Hertog, funding has different roles in times of crisis: symbolic role, communicative role, policy-making role, presenting leverage over third countries, revealing horizontal and vertical institutional legal and politics struggles and naming & shaming.

D. The challenges of funding in times of crisis

The main challenges are accountability, rules and safeguards; external migration funds programming, management and monitoring; developing impact assessment mechanisms; parliamentary scrutiny; co-management with non-member states and including civil society in the discussion and design of policies.



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Mr Den Hertog pointed out the fact that too much emphasis to funding in solutions to refugee crisis monetizes questions in international relations over responsibility-sharing for asylum seekers, creating self-imposed dependence on third countries.

In the Q&A session, queries were made about the strength of the Commission as an institution in the field of home affairs. Discussion also extended to the coordination mechanisms through which organizations on the ground manage money. The lack of implementation mechanisms in the EU was mentioned, in contrast with the United Nations agencies.

Wednesday 6 April 2016: Strengthening Schengen's external border and reforming the Dublin system

Raoul Ueberecken, Director for Home Affairs, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union: "Strengthening Schengen's external border"

Rapporteur: Klara Richtarechova, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain la Neuve

Mr. Ueberecken pointed out the complex situation of refugee crisis that European Council has had to deal under the pressure of EU Member States. EU realized it was not ready to deal with such enormous number of asylum seekers in such a short period of time. The Schengen Borders Code is regulation on the integrated border management. It is European Union policy, which however was not respected due to mass influx of refugees. This crisis has developed every month and has had different phases which had to be dealt in Council accordingly. One of the problems EU had to resolve is very lengthy process of asylum processing, which had to be speeded up in order to deal with that high number of asylum seekers. The return policy, which is established in theory, is hard to implement in practice because it takes long time to get acceptance of the third country. Current policies in place, such as Dublin Regulation are not fit for the times of crisis. Italy and Greece have not been able to deal effectively with those numbers of asylum seekers in the manner set out in the regulation. Even though Italy and Greece believe that European solution should be found, this opinion is not shared by all MSs, which European Council has to take into account. Therefore mandatory quotas for relocation mechanism which would enable equal sharing within EU states could not be put into practice. The mass influx could not be handled properly by Greece and Italy. The choices of the states concerned were: are they going to stop an asylum seeker on his way mostly to Germany who did not claim for asylum (and will they thus be responsible for creating a humanitarian crisis), or simply just let them go north to their desired country? In order to deal with those high numbers of refugees effectively, only minimum security checks were made, which is the reason why this European solidarity was also exploited by terrorists.



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The Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) mechanism was activated at the level of the Union for the first time ever. EU Member States, Commission, EEAS and relevant EU Agencies have been fully mobilized to support Council in managing migration flows. DG ECHO and DG Home have been the main two actors in the Commission handling the migration crisis. In each EU member state an IPCR contact point can be found which provides information to Commission about the situation.

On one hand unilateral actions taken by Member states were undermining European solutions, but on the other hand they were slowing down the flow. At the end of the year, EU came up with another legislative package. Commission was tasked with implementation of EU-Turkey deal, which represents a shift in its competencies. While the importance of this deal is known, it is only a statement and not a signed treaty. Among new suggestions stand out: establishment of European Board and Coast Guard, Revision of Dublin Regulation and establishment of legislation that would allow providing of financial support from the EU budget for humanitarian assistance within the EU. Thousands of new trained people will be deployed to Frontex and EASO offices. It is strongly hoped by the European Council that the refugee crisis of 2015 will not be repeated in 2016.

Amanda Taylor, AIDA/EDAL Junior Legal Officer, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE): “Legal standards and relevant case law in the context of recent EU asylum policy changes”

Rapporteur: Anna Friedli, University of Basel

„The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) is a pan-European alliance of 90 NGOs protecting and advancing the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. Our mission is to promote the establishment of fair and humane European asylum policies and practices in accordance with international human rights law¹“. It was founded in 1974 and stretches over 38 countries. The work mainly consists of dealing with legislation and promotes different projects such as AIDA (Asylum Information Database), EDAL (European Database of Asylum Law), LEAP (Legal exchange and mutual learning between asylum practitioners to promote fundamental rights in the EU), No Longer Alone (Advancing receptions standards for unaccompanied children) and ELENA (Index).

Legal Basis

Currently, there is somehow a crisis of legality within the European Union caused by the massive influx of refugees mainly coming from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The relocation

¹ ECRE (n.d.): Mission statement“ in: URL: <http://www.ecre.org/about/this-is-ecre/about-us.html>, 17.4.16.



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system does not work due to different positions taken by States. According to the legal basis, Art. 78(3) TFEU, Greece and Italy as “hotspots countries” should be supported by the EU to ease the situation².

Recent EU Asylum Policy changes

The EU-Turkey deal from March 17-18, 2016 is considered as confusing, contradictory and morally questionable. In terms of this agreement between Turkey and EU the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme³ will be activated. To prove whether Turkey can be seen as a Third Country it needs Art. 38(1) of APD (Asylum Procedures Directive), which establishes common standards of safeguards and guarantees to access a fair and efficient asylum procedure⁴.

The conditions in Turkey do not comply with the legal conditions of standards due to doubtful facts (geographical limitations and only bound by the 1951 Convention obligations in regards to ‘European’ refugees and, Syrians – right to reside but denied prospect of long-term legal integration + limited rights to education and employment, other nationalities even less rights and excluded from “family reunification”, allegations of non-refoulement and of ill treatment towards asylum seekers and migrants).

Procedural safeguards and the country conditions cannot be considered as given and therefore, the Turkey-EU deal is in the ECRE’s unlawful and does not meet the standards held by the EU.

Elly Schlein, Member of the European Parliament (S&D Group, Italy): “Reforming the Dublin System”

Rapporteur: Patrick Clasen, University of Duisburg-Essen

As could have been suspected before, the session with MEP Elly Schlein was a lot more political than those we had before. In her talk, she highlighted two issues.

First, she criticized the European Commission (EC) proposal, which was released on the same morning, as not being ambitious enough. In the proposal, the EC put forward three possible options: First, a “Dublin Plus”, in which everything stays the way it is, with relocation schemes to be put in place in times of crises. The second option is a permanent automatic redistribution

² cf. Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 14 September 2015 and 2015/1601 22 September 2015.

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/securing-eu-borders/legal-documents/docs/commission_recommendation_for_a_voluntary_humanitarian_admission_scheme_with_turkey_en.pdf

⁴ cf. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013L0032>.



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of asylum seekers within the European Union (EU). The third option would be a European solution, with a common European asylum policy and a strong role of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). However, the EC admitted that the third option is not going to work politically in the short and medium term.

MEP Schlein criticized the EC for shying away from a comprehensive proposal for policy change. Consequently, she made clear that the S&D-Group in the EP would not be open to purely cosmetic changes, but would create pressure to push a substantive legislative debate. However, she believed that it would be hard for the EP to fight alone (i.e. without the EC) against the “selfish governments” of the member states.

Second, she highlighted that in addition to the short-term measures, mid-term and long-term perspectives are much needed. In the medium term, mutual recognition of refugee status and legal opportunities to migrate to the EU, both for refugees as well as for “economic” migrants (a term which she challenged), are needed. In the long term, the EU needs to address the root causes of migration, which she identified as conflicts, climate change and global inequality. Although these are goals which cannot be achieved soon, policy change would have to be made now, she argued.

In the Q&A-Session, questions were raised on the coherence of policies of European socialists and social democrats, and on a common list of safe third countries. On the first point, she admitted that indeed the S&D group has a problem of coherence. Conflict arises especially between the group in the EP and socialist heads of government who follow national pressures to build fences and refuse refugees. However, she also pointed out that despite different perspectives within the S&D group, a common position has always been found to date. Regarding a common list of safe countries, she agreed that differences of national lists creates problems of harmonization.

In this context, she insisted that Turkey cannot be considered as a safe country, and that the EU-Turkey deal sealed on 17-18 March is highly problematic. From her point of view, if it will be implemented, it will certainly not comply with international norms. For instance, she pointed out that there are reports of the principle of non-refoulement not being met in Turkey. Apart from that, she criticized that the exchange of people is cynical and not going to work the way it is supposed to.



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Thursday 7 April 2016: EU-Turkey deal, return policy and fight against migrant smuggling

The day started by attending the **LIBE Committee meeting at the European Parliament**. The seminar participants were very lucky, because in the first part of the meeting, the European Commission representative presented the EC Communication on the next operational steps in EU-Turkey cooperation in the field of migration. The presentation was followed by a questions and answers session from the Members of the European Parliament and a lively discussion about the implications of the EU-Turkey deal on the rights of the asylum-seekers.

After leaving the European Parliament, the group had time to coordinate their national positions for the simulation game. In the afternoon, further sessions with invited experts were held.

Peter David, Assistant Policy Officer, European Commission, DG HOME, Unit C1 - Irregular Migration and Return Policy: “Migrant smuggling - what is the EU doing against this booming business?”

Rapporteur: Clarissa do Nascimento Tabosa, Comenius University, Bratislava

The session on the EU response to tackle migrant smuggling presented the participants of the seminar with the criminal law dimension of migration. Peter David presented the EU Action Plan against Smuggling. The session was divided in three parts: definition of smuggling; the EU response; and a conclusion on the matter.

The definition of smuggling contained in the Council Directive 2002/90 entails the facilitation of unauthorized entry, transit and residence of migrants to a foreign country. It differs from trafficking in the elements of the consent and exploitation/coercion. This point was very controversial and gave rise to discussion among the group particularly in relation to the fact that facilitating residence also constitute a crime – therefore also those providing humanitarian help may fall under the label of “smuggler” and be held criminally responsible. One of the participants of the seminar raised a question on whether in the Action Plan there is a differentiation among different kind of smugglers (for instance family members from organized crime) but the answer was that this is up to the prosecution to deal with specific cases.



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In relation to the EU response through the EU Action Plan against Smuggling, adopted in May 2015, it was pointed out it is a multi-disciplinary plan which entails four pillars:

- *Enhancing police and judicial cooperation with the aim of investigating and bringing into prosecution migrant smugglers;*
- *Improving gathering and sharing of information in order to effectively target smuggling. This was said to be already in place, working, and it is fully integrated with EUROPOL;*
- *Enhancing prevention and giving special attention to vulnerable groups through prevention activities such as raising awareness of the risk of smuggling and developing a counter-narrative in the media;*
- *Stronger cooperation with third world countries.*

Some of the measures in the action plan include also strong action against the employment of irregular migrants. This was also a point of discussion among the participants – is this a measure whose effects are felt more by the smugglers or by the migrants themselves? Is it a plan aimed at the smugglers exclusively? We could see that in this area the concern is primarily placed on security rather than the humanitarian dimension of the current migration and refugee crisis; also for this reasons this session gave rise to one of the most interesting discussions among the participants of the seminar.

In conclusion it was highlighted the aim of the measures taken by the Union is “to turn it from a low risk, high profit business into a high risk, low profit undertaking, through a far reaching and multidisciplinary approach”.

Ruairi Topping, Associate Liaison Officer, Frontex Brussels Office: “Frontex – European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the EU External Borders”

Rapporteur: Siri Svanemir Eriksen, University of Bergen, Norway

Mr. Topping gave a very interesting introduction to Frontex missions and activities during the Pont seminar on the 7. April. The participants got an overview over the land and sea border which the agency is covering, and how the decentralized agency is working to secure EU’s borders. In light of the current crisis the Frontex activity has been tripled. During 2015 one of the main missions for the agency was risk analysis that resulted in detection of 1.8 million illegal border crossings. However, this is not the same as the actual number of entries into the EU when they often count the same person at different border crossing. Usually they Frontex operates with a number of 1 million people crossing into EU last year. These are mainly from



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Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. But the lack of documentation makes it harder to report nationalities. The main routes to get into Europe is the Eastern Mediterranean route, continuing as the Western Balkan route. But a lot of migrants also use the Central Mediterranean route. The focus is to enhance stronger border controls on these routes, but the result of it could be that the migrants start using other routes to reach Europe. Frontex task is then to try to monitor this. The participants also became aware of the massive joint operations the agency conducts, where the border guards carry out rescue operations, registration, fingerprinting, debriefing and also returns when necessary.

A part of the meeting was dedicated to a discussion on the implementation of the hotspot approach where Frontex is working in cooperation with Europol, Eurojust and EASO to identify and help migrants at the borders. Frontex's main task here has been to support the returns of migrants. A question was raised from one of the participants on how the return policy were conducted. Mr. Topping explained that Frontex has no involvement in return decisions, that is the competence of the Member State. Frontex is involved in the process in terms of transportation and coordination. They also ensure that there will be Frontex Joint Operations Officer present at joint return flights.

The meeting also touched upon the fact that Frontex operates with pooled resources. The agency does not have its own equipment, and therefore relies on the Member States to supply them with assets. Another question was raised about the proposal of the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG). Even though Mr. Topping was not in a position to speculate about the legislative outcome of the proposal, a debate took place on how current lack of resources might be the reason for the upcoming proposal and how this would affect EU's ability to safely protect their borders. Even though there has been a decrease of migrants lately the assumptions for 2016 is still to see a rise in migratory pressure, increasing security threat and increase in traveller flows. All in all, the meeting with Mr. Topping was very useful and interesting.

Friday, 8 April 2016: European Council simulation game

Friday was dedicated to the simulation game. The simulation European Council negotiations focused on dealing with a new wave of asylum-seekers originating from countries of sub-Saharan Africa and seeking to get to Europe from North African shores. The scenario assumed that the situation in North African countries is the same as the actual situation now (the same governments and socio-economic situations in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia as in reality) and there is no significant wave of people emigrating from these countries as such. Moreover, the scenario assumed that the recent wave of asylum-seekers crossing into Europe from Turkey into Greece has receded and the situation has stabilized there.



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Approximately one million people from sub-Saharan countries were assumed to be seeking to cross the Mediterranean, heading mainly to Italy, France and Spain. This new situation affected Egypt less than the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania). In particular, some of these countries might seek a similar kind of arrangement with the EU as Turkey has recently obtained (financial assistance and a fast track towards visa-free regime for their citizens' short-term travels to Europe).

The questions addressed by the European Council in response to this scenario were:

- how to achieve a fair distribution of refugees amongst the EU member states?
- how to finance the most important emergency relief actions?
- how to secure Europe's borders against illegal migration?

Prior to the seminar students were assigned their respective countries/institutions on a random basis. They also received the scenario of the game, rules of procedure and a short sketch of interests of the actor they would represent. Each participant prepared a position paper ahead of the simulation game. On Thursday students also had time to coordinate their national positions for the simulation game. On Friday morning the simulation rolled out for three hours, followed by a session of one and a half hours where Prof de Zwaan and Prof Kaeding gave some general observations on students' performance as a group and also provided individual feedback on their contribution to the negotiations.

The simulation game was engaging, lively and close to the real. Draft conclusions of the European Council were disseminated by the President of the European Council ahead of the seminar and further elaborated during the game. The President of the Commission and the president of the European Council did an excellent job for finding common solutions.



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Evaluation

A detailed evaluation of the seminar showed that all participants were extremely satisfied with the training. The participants appreciated the programme and the organization of the seminar very useful and effective. Generally, participants considered that the seminar helped them to understand better the decision-making processes in Brussels and of EU Asylum and Migration policies. The participants appreciated the balanced representation of different perspectives of different institutions in the EU, think-tanks and NGOs and the diversity of the seminar participants.

This general positive impression is also shown by numbers. Following a scale from -- (not useful) to ++ (very useful), 16 of 20 responses rated the seminar with ++ and 4 participants rated it with +.

For illustration, we have included some of the pictures and comments from the participants below:



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The seminar has been one of my best learning experiences. Every speaker was not only well prepared but happy to engage with us. Prof de Zwaan was always enthusiastic and respectful of our inputs, TEPSA were so well organized, friendly and accommodating. A hugely successful seminar for everyone!

I wanted to let you know that I just found out that I got a full-time job as an inspector from Finnish Immigration Services. During the recruiting process they really appreciated and valued our Working Seminar in Brussels last week. I want to thank TEPSA again for organizing something like this. I'm sure it will benefit many others as well when starting our careers. I think it's important for you as well to know that it really made a difference.



I found this seminar an excellent opportunity for people who are interested in EU Asylum and Migration policies. The organization is incredible and the content of the seminar is extremely rewarding. I feel really lucky to have been part of it and I am grateful for TEPSA for organizing it!



It was really a unique experience. Apart from the visits to the Institutions and all those people we have met, what I appreciate the most is the excellent choice of participants that you have made! The variable background that all of us have was really interesting because we could all have a different input and a different perspective. What's more, Prof. de Zwaan and you all were nice and kind and really did coordinate everything perfectly!

Great opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of this policy field!

