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MIGRATION AND REFUGEES IN EU–MIDDLE EAST RELATIONS

Beste İşleyen and Tamirace Fakhoury

Introduction

There is a long history of migration between the European Union (EU) and the Middle East, which is characterised by diversity in terms of migration dynamics and the related evolution of migration cooperation between the two continents. During the 1960s and 1970s, migration from the Maghreb and Turkey into Europe, especially Western European countries, was to meet labour demands and was therefore actively encouraged. This was followed by migration for family reunification purposes in the 1980s. It was also during the same decade that Southern European countries became destination countries, and migration started to become a security issue in Europe. It was however during the 1990s that migration became securitised in European political and public discourse. This lies behind EU efforts from the 1990s on to integrate migration into its external action and policies with regard to the Middle East. On the one hand, the external dimension of EU migration policy takes the form of “association” with neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon, through such policies as Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the signing of Association Agreements (AA) with the so-called Southern neighbourhood. On the other hand and in the case of Turkey, “enlargement” has been the main mechanism in the external dimension of EU migration and border policies. As a result, the Southern Mediterranean has turned into a key target of EU policies and practices in the management of borders, irregular migration and protracted displacement. More recently, much public and political attention has been on the so-called 2015 “refugee crisis” relating to the still ongoing Syrian civil war and the resulting displacement of millions of Syrians in the region.

What are the main drivers of EU–Middle East relations in irregular migration management? What policy instruments, mechanisms and practices underpin this cooperation? How can we make sense of the previously stated developments of externalisation in the light of international and EU law, and what are their ethical and normative implications not just for the cooperating parties themselves, but also for the lives and rights of refugees and migrants? To address these questions, this chapter looks at EU cooperation with two countries: Turkey and Lebanon. The selection of the two countries is informed by the fact that Turkey and Lebanon are two major refugee hosting countries in the EU’s so-called Southern neighbourhood, which is also a key reason for the EU’s earmarking of substantial funding for these countries in the management of borders and displaced populations. According to the latest figures published by the UN Refugee

Agency (UNHCR) dated January 2019, Lebanon is “the country hosting the largest number of refugees per capita” (UNHCR, 2019a: 1). Syrians constitute the highest number of refugees registered with the UNHCR, amounting to more than 950,000. The Lebanese government’s estimations go well beyond the UNHCR official numbers, reaching almost 1.5 million Syrians currently residing in the country. Iraqis are the second largest number of refugees in Lebanon (around 15,000). It is important to note that UNCHR has stopped registering Syrian refugees in connection with a decision by the Lebanese government in 2015 (UNHCR, 2019a). Turkey officially hosts the largest number of Syrian displaced people. UNHCR 2019 figures estimate 3.6 million Syrian, 170,000 Afghan, 142,000 Iraqi and 39,000 Iranian refugees staying in the country. The low number of third country resettlements from Turkey during the same year – 11,300 people (UNHCR, 2019b) – together with facts from Lebanon illustrate that humanitarian duties and refugee governance responsibilities fall upon the Southern Mediterranean countries. It is therefore not surprising that the EU has high incentives to closely cooperate with Lebanon and Turkey in harmony with its pre-emptive approach resting on externalisation.

In the following section, we provide a general overview of policies and practices of migration, refugee and border governance in the context of EU–Middle East relations. We also define and explain the central mechanisms, policy tools and practices of EU–Middle East cooperation in migration management. While the case studies of Turkey and Lebanon in the second and third sections focus primarily on the so-called refugee crisis of 2015,¹ we emphasise in the first section the need for a historical perspective. It is because recent actions, decisions and policies are built upon and further enhance a much longer EU strategy of restricting unwanted migration through a pre-emptive approach and dislocating humanitarian aid.

Conceptualising migration, refugee and border governance in EU–Middle East relations

Since the 1990s, the EU has sought to “externalise” border and migration governance to the neighbouring countries in the south through a range of tools such as readmission agreements, training and financial assistance (Boswell, 2003; Lavenex and Uçarer, 2004). The rationale behind externalisation is the enlarging of space and the transfer of responsibilities for managing migration *beyond* the EU’s territorial limits (Bialasiewicz, 2012). Boswell identifies “restrictive” measures as integral elements of externalisation. Accompanied by technical and financial aid, restrictive measures refer to EU activities of migration outsourcing (Boswell, 2003). Constituting the EU’s “pre-emptive” approach to migration, the idea behind outsourcing is to stop irregular migrants at the remotest and earliest point possible (Cuttitta, 2018). The pre-emptive approach has had the outcome that the EU’s Southern neighbours have been taking on increasing duties on behalf of the EU (Bialasiewicz, 2012). A recent EU initiative in this respect is the EU Emergency Trust Fund, this provides significant funds for the Sahel and North African countries so that the latter further develops border control capacities towards the effective management of onward journeys to the north (Barana, 2018).

One of the main tools of externalisation is visa policy, which has proven itself to be a building block of the EU’s pre-emptive border security approach and has also been integrated into both enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (Lavenex, 2002; Lavenex and Uçarer, 2004). EU countries make an increasing use of “off-shore border” practices, both individually and collectively. The underlying logic of the off-shore border is that “risks” and “threats” emanating from the “outside” must be addressed prior to their arrival at the external frontiers of the EU and even before they set off (Vaughan-Williams, 2010: 1073–1074). This turns third states as well as private actors (such as airline companies) into agents responsible for

the authorisation of “legal” travel by checking passports and visas, and collecting and sharing passenger data as part of EU border control practices (Bigo, 2014).

There is an increasing reliance of the EU on readmission agreements with third countries. Readmission agreements are “restrictive” tools of externalisation (Boswell, 2003). They are predicated upon a “policy of delegation”, which “serves as a means of transferring responsibility for action and judgement from the legal arena of the state” (Başaran, 2008: 344) or the regional unit; namely, the EU. Readmission agreements raise important legal, normative and ethical questions. They result in dislocating practices of international protection outside the EU’s jurisdiction. The “safe third country” concept, for example, works to free the EU of legal obligations and action as the so-called safe third country assumes the responsibility of deciding on asylum claims and deportations (Başaran, 2008; Aalberts and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2014).

Moreover, a humanitarian discourse has emerged in EU border control policies and practices as exemplified by operations conducted by EU state and non-state actors in the Central Mediterranean. There is an increasing presence of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, known as FRONTEX, in international waters and in third countries’ waters. Similar practices can be observed in Italian patrolling and SAR operations taking place close to and within Libyan waters with the declared goal to prevent migrant deaths and alleviate human suffering. The externalisation of SAR enables the EU to deny responsibility by rendering the countries of the South “responsible sovereigns” in providing assistance to migrant boats/ships in distress and granting rights and protection upon disembarkation (Aalberts and Gammeltoft, 2014: 456; Cuttitta, 2018). The training of Libyan coast guards by European actors or the EU’s financing of new vessels for the Turkish Coast Guard Command are just a few examples. While not ignoring human rights violations against refugees in the EU, such as camp conditions in Greece (van Liempt et al., 2017) or interventions at sea (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2018), many scholars, activists and international migration agencies express deep concerns over the moral and ethical implications of externalisation. The inhumane conditions of detention centres in countries of disembarkation in North Africa, systemic violence, exclusion, racism and the limited rights of refugees to international protection in the South Mediterranean have been widely reported (Andersson, 2014; Cuttitta, 2018)

Externalisation also encompasses the outsourcing of refugee management. As Boswell (2003) argues, the “preventative” approach is integral to EU migration management policies and practices. The logic is to eliminate the root causes of migration through, for instance, the provision of (development) aid. The EU’s refugee support programmes in Turkey and Lebanon rest on a preventative approach. Policy instruments, such as the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and similar EU refugee support programmes in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, display the EU’s growing tendency to push humanitarian action and responsibilities outside its borders. Technical and financial support aiming to improve the life conditions of refugees through health, education and vocational training are designed to reduce reasons for onward movement towards the EU.

Migration and borders in EU–Turkey relations

The high number of irregular border crossings from Turkey into the EU throughout 2015 has put EU–Turkish cooperation in migration and management at the core of diplomacy and action. That said, given the broader history of EU–Turkey migration and border cooperation, restricting our focus to the 2015 “refugee crisis” is misleading. In fact, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of relations between the two parties on this specific policy area, we need to take into account the diversity of migration dynamics in, through and from Turkey to the EU.

Traditionally, Turkey has been considered a country of emigration. During the 1960s and 1970s, migration primarily involved Turkish workers going to Western European countries experiencing labour shortages. This was followed by the arrival of Turkish asylum seekers in European countries in the 1980s and 1990s. Starting from the mid-1990s, Turkey has been experiencing new human mobility dynamics which are closely linked with security and political developments in its neighbourhood. Multiple conflicts and wars in its eastern and south-eastern neighbourhood have turned Turkey into a country of transit and immigration for people coming from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq and elsewhere (Kirişçi, 2007).

On the other hand, the EU accession process has become a strong incentive for Turkey to undertake legal, institutional and policy-related reforms in migration governance. This became particularly evident after 1999 when Turkey obtained candidate status for EU membership (İçduygu and Üstübcü, 2014). Indeed, the transformation of Turkey's irregular migration governance since the early 2000s is an example of Europeanisation (Özçürümez and Şenses, 2011). One of the "short-term" objectives of the 2001 Accession Partnership Document for Turkey is "the development of effective border control to prevent illegal immigration and illegal trafficking in human beings and drugs" (Council of the European Union, 2001: Article 4.1). Remarkable reforms in the context of the partnership document include amendments in the Turkish Passport Law and the Citizenship Law.

Turkey's most recent legal reform in the area of migration and asylum governance concerns the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) which was adopted in April 2013 and came into force in April 2014. Part of Turkey's adoption of the EU's acquis, the LFIP is the first Turkish law on asylum and migration that governs matters relating to the statuses and rights of foreigners in the country, including their entry, stay, exit and international refugee protection (Sarı and Dinçer, 2017). The LFIP did not lift Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention, meaning that the country grants refugee status only to those fleeing from Europe. This explains the introduction of the so-called temporary protection regime for displaced Syrian people. In place since 2011, the temporary protection regime became part of Turkish legislation in April 2014. The "Temporary Protection Regulation" of 22 October 2014 contains specific provisions on the rights and statuses granted to Syrians, including the principle of *non-refoulement*, the right to legal stay, and access to health and education services (Toğral Koca, 2016). The temporary protection regime is outside the scope of the LFIP's international protection system to which other non-European asylum seekers have access by means of individual applications for a re-settlement option in a third country (Sarı and Dinçer, 2017).

In 2016, Turkey adopted two regulations to facilitate the legal access of Syrians to the Turkish labour market thereby extending such work permits to a larger group of non-citizen population in the country. Despite their limited effectiveness in providing a long-term solution to the precarious socio-economic conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Baban et al., 2017), the two regulations serve the enlarging of space for governing human mobility towards the EU. This is reflected in the words of Volkan Bozkır, the (then) Turkish Minister for European Affairs, who explains the rationale behind the regulations as follows: "We are trying to reduce the pressure for illegal migration by giving Syrians in Turkey work permits" (Gürses and Ozkan, 2016).

The EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 is without dispute one of the most crucial and disputed developments of externalisation in recent years. Justified as a response to the border crossings of summer 2015 and early 2016, the Statement is the result of intense high-level political dialogue between Turkey and the EU. According to the statement, Turkey committed itself "to accepting the rapid return of all migrants not in need of international protection crossing from Turkey into Greece" (European Council, 2016). The provisions regarding the return of migrants rest on the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, which was signed in

December 2013 with November 2017 as the date for the agreement to come into force (Ulusoy and Baatjes, 2017). Yet, a decision by the EU–Turkey Joint Readmission Committee advanced the date for the readmission provisions “to become fully applicable from June 2016” (Council of the European Union, 2016).

The legal basis for returns from Greece is the declaration of Turkey as a safe third country, which has necessitated certain legal adjustments. Pursuant to Article 38 of the EU’s Asylum Procedures Directive, the European Commission adopted a Communication in February 2016 to clarify the safe third country concept. The safe third country concept “requires that the possibility exists to receive protection in accordance with the Geneva Convention, but does not require that the safe third country has ratified that Convention without geographical reservation” (European Commission, 2016a). The Communication, in this way, allows for bypassing Turkey’s geographical limitation to the Geneva Convention. Shortly after the EU–Turkey Statement, the Greek Parliament adopted a bill with a set of criteria to decide on the safe third country. Incorporated into Greek law, the bill reiterates the 2016 Communication in that a safe country is one where individuals have access to protection in line with the Geneva Convention (Dimitriadi, 2016).

By returning individuals to Turkey, the EU not only disclaims legal responsibility by physically removing individuals from the EU’s space of jurisdiction but it also expands its migration regime by outsourcing duties and action to a legal system outside its territorial limits. Recent data on readmitted individuals since April 2016 demonstrate that the geography of deportation has shifted from the EU’s legal space to Turkey. By March 2018, 2164 irregular border crossers were returned to Turkey under the Statement.² Top nationalities among the returnees are Pakistanis, Syrians, Algerians, Bangladeshis and Afghans. Only a few readmitted non-Syrian nationals have so far made asylum requests in Turkey, which official reports and academic research attribute to practices on the ground with regard to access to information and asylum procedures that hinder possibilities to receive protection (Ulusoy and Baatjes, 2017).

Visa policy is a key component through which the EU has sought to incorporate Turkey into its system of governance, rules and practices. The EU accession process requires that Turkey makes certain legislative and administrative changes with a view to aligning its visa practices and procedures with EU standards. The visa harmonisation process gained new momentum with the launch of the “Visa Liberalisation Dialogue” according to which Turkey needs to fulfil 72 benchmarks (European Commission, 2016c). The intertwining of irregular migration management and visa policy in EU externalisation agenda is evident in that issues relating to visas are primarily addressed under the “migration management” block of the visa liberalisation process. The benchmarks specifically dealing with visa policy entail requirements concerning document security, rules and procedures on the issuance of visas, different visa types applying to non-EU third country nationals, legislative changes and administrative capacity-building (European Commission, 2016c). Visa policy is therefore a pre-emptive tool of the EU’s strategy of externalising migration management.

Turkish visa policy reforms have put new forms of control into practice by revising rules and procedures of access of non-EU citizens to Turkey. This is manifest in the readjustment of the meaning of legal travel for third country citizens by altering existing visa practices vis-a-vis particular population groups. By 2010, Turkey had engaged in a process of de-bordering by lifting visa-requirements for citizens from Libya, Jordan and Lebanon for example. While the latter two still enjoy visa-free access to Turkey, Libya is a case of re-bordering through externalisation as Libyan citizens have, since September 2015, been required to get a visa to enter Turkish territories, which the EU sees as progress towards the country’s “aligning (of) its visa system . . . to the Schengen visa list” (European Commission, 2016b: 6). Similarly, despite having signed

a visa-free agreement with Syria in 2009, Turkey started to impose visa restrictions for Syrian nationals arriving by sea or by air in 2016. Taking into account Turkey's 2016 decision on stricter visa requirements for Iraqi nationals, the EU considers changes in Turkish visa practices as regards to Iraqi and Syrian nationalities as having "contributed to putting an end to high irregular migration flows directed towards the EU" (European Commission, 2016d: 6).

Recent research on Turkey has called for decentring the study of irregular migration by shifting our focus away from diplomacy, policies and law to everyday practices (İşleyen, 2018a; 2018b). An investigation of practices is a fruitful exercise to see how irregular migration is governed in practice by Turkish border officials on an everyday basis. Research highlights the emergence of new techniques of controlling non-citizen mobility in Turkey, which cannot be explained by merely looking at high-level politics, discourse, or legal and institutional framework. Daily practices of checkpoints and travel documents emerge in line with border security actors' risk perceptions regarding the mobility of migrants and create new spaces of governing far from the state borders/the EU border (İşleyen, 2018a). Studying border security practices is a useful exercise to uncover the interplay between mobility control and the provision of care for migrants' non-traditional spaces, which complicates a territorial understanding of where irregular migration towards the EU is governed in neighbouring countries (İşleyen, 2018a).

Migration and refugee cooperation between Lebanon and the EU

Lebanon, a small state governed by a complex power-sharing system organised along sectarian lines, is both a country prone to emigration (Abdelhady, 2008) and a major host country for migrant workers and refugees (De Bel Air, 2017). Lebanon's sizeable diaspora is scattered across every continent, and the country's economy has to a great extent relied on the remittances that Lebanese living abroad send back home. At the same time, Lebanon has been a key destination for refugee populations who have fled upheavals from various Arab countries such as Palestine, Sudan and Iraq. Since the outbreak of Syria's war in 2011, Lebanon has received more than one million displaced people, making it the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world (UNHCR, 2019a: 1). Due to its reliance on services, the small state has moreover not ceased to host migrant workers from the Arab region, Africa and Asia (De Bel Air, 2017).

Since the inception of the 1995 Barcelona Process, framed as EMP the EU has developed interest in Lebanon as a policy interlocutor on asylum and migration management. Yet bilateral cooperation on migration and displacement has never been as strategic as today, and more specifically following forced migration from Syria. Within this context, how has the EU–Lebanon cooperation on migration and refugee governance evolved, and what are its key pillars?

In 2002, Lebanon signed an AA with the EU which entered into force four years later. In the policy field of migration, special attention is dedicated in the agreement to cooperation on preventing and fighting illegal immigration and on improving the rights and integration of migrant communities (Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon, 2002). Still, at this stage, cooperation on migration management remains couched in vague terms. The subsequent ENP Action Plan (2007–2013) articulates a clearer vision for cooperation on migration and asylum issues. The intent of this cooperation is three-fold: to optimise the benefits that migration yields for both the EU and Lebanon, to enhance coordination on legal migration and the fight against illegal migration and to consolidate cooperation on the development of a rights-based asylum system in Lebanon (European Commission, 2007).

The Action Plan envisages the development of "a comprehensive and balanced dialogue" on issues at the heart of migration and development, and legal and illegal migration including

visa and readmission. It also foresees the initiation of a dialogue on asylum and international protection measures, especially when it comes to the issue of Palestinian refugees. The Action Plan further signals the intention of both parties to cooperate on a “comprehensive protection system, in line with international standards” (European Commission, 2007).

While the ENP Plan can be lauded for initiating a dialogue on migration and refugee issues, it remains part of a broader EU engagement that mirrored at the time a one-size-fits-all approach (Bicchi, 2006; Fakhoury, 2014). Thus, its adoption is to be embedded in a wider policy context in which the EU had not yet given due attention to MENA countries’ diverse migratory and refugee challenges. For instance, the 2005 Global Approach to Migration (GAM) – which constitutes the structured framework of the EU’s external migration and refugee policy – remains to a large extent disconnected from the region’s context-based challenges. More specifically, it fails to pin down the EU’s external refugee policy in a region which has been a perennial terrain for conflict-induced displacement (Fakhoury, 2019). Within this climate, notwithstanding the EU’s continuous advocacy for Lebanon to improve its asylum system, its policy interest in the governance of migratory movements within, to and from Lebanon remained low. This is not surprising. At the time, Lebanon was neither a critically strategic partner in EU external migration and asylum management, nor did it have the geographical leverage of the “gatekeeper” as other countries such as Morocco and Tunisia have always had. Indeed, despite encountering local resistance, the EU had already started as early as the 1990s negotiating agreements, tying visa liberalisation regimes and readmission, with countries such as Morocco (Boswell, 2003).

In Lebanon, such a policy agenda has acquired prominence in the wake of protracted displacement from Syria. Indeed, by 2016, the EU had developed a myriad of refugee cooperation tools with Lebanon, which changed its status from a “superficial” (Emerson et al., 2007) to a prioritised partner. At the heart of this cooperation is the EU’s interest in stabilising Lebanon in the face of the refugee challenge while ensuring that its funding instruments provide refugees with prospects that allow them to remain closer to home and at a distance from the EU’s borders (Fakhoury, 2019).

Since the outbreak of Syria’s war, the EU has earmarked the largest chunk of its funding to help mitigate the effects of the Syrian refugee challenge on Lebanese soil (European Commission, 2019). Declared objectives are to prioritise the resilience of Lebanon’s host and refugee communities. In 2015, breaking away from a one-size-fits-all approach, the EU revised the ENP, pledging to tailor its engagement to the specific challenges that individual partner countries have encountered in the Southern Neighborhood (European Commission, 2017). In the case of Lebanon, the EU did not renegotiate a new ENP action plan after the last one (2013–2015) had elapsed. In 2016, it adopted a new set of partnership priorities and an annexed EU–Lebanon Compact that privileged the country’s capacity to respond to the challenge of mass displacement on its territory (European Union, 2016). Negotiated in the context of the 2016 Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in London, the EU–Lebanon Compact foresees a variety of funding instruments that seek to facilitate Syrian refugee integration in Lebanon. At the same time, the Compact allocates funding to projects designed to boost Lebanon’s development, security and political reform. In the context of these revised partnership priorities, Lebanon commits to easing Syrian refugee stay such as waiving the refugee registration fee and allowing them to work in labour-intensive fields such as agriculture. In 2017, the EU established a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Trade and Investment with Lebanon in which it discussed the possibility of boosting trade facilitation schemes in return for facilitating Syrian refugee employment. This proposal however encountered much resistance from Lebanon’s policy spheres (Lavenex and Fakhoury, forthcoming). Political executives argued that Syrians’ formal and longer-term integration in Lebanon’s market economy would add significant strains. As most Syrian refugees

in Lebanon are Sunni, politicians have moreover flagged their integration as a factor that could disrupt the fragile demographic balance between Muslims and Christians.

At this juncture, despite the EU's significant funding power and its departure from a one-size-fits-all approach, its instruments have had little traction for improving refugee resilience and rights on Lebanese soil (Staes, 2018). In 2018, the UNHCR published a survey that revealed that more than 70% of surveyed Syrians lack a legal residence permit (UNHCR, 2018). Indeed, Lebanon's policy frame towards Syrian refugees has become increasingly securitised since 2011 (Fakhoury, 2017). At the outset of Syria's war, Lebanon adopted a lax policy of reception. By 2015, citing the high economic and infrastructural costs that the Syrian refugee issue have imposed on Lebanon, the government closed its borders. It also called on the UN Refugee Agency to stop registering refugees. Since then, the Lebanese government has enforced practices that have curtailed Syrian refugees' rights and access to livelihoods. Despite the EU's proclaimed intent to continue supporting Lebanon's resilience in the context of mass displacement, Lebanon has strongly lobbied since 2017 for the rash return of refugees. Against this backdrop, Lebanon's ruling coalitions have increasingly shown disapproval of the EU's calls for easing Syrian refugee integration (Rida, 2018). One crucial point of contention hinges on the issue of Syrian refugee return. On the one hand, the EU stresses that return should only take place when a political settlement in Syria has been reached. On the other, Lebanon's key political executives have called for prompt refugee return to the regime-held areas in Syria as the refugee burden has become in their viewpoint untenable. Another point of contention revolves around the stalling of the 2014 negotiated mobility partnership in the light of prevailing disagreements over readmission (Seeberg, 2018).

Concluding remarks

In the light of the post-2011 upheavals and the ensuing displacement that they have caused, the EU has not only scaled up but also more clearly defined the contours of its external migration and refugee policy with its southern neighbours. Additionally, it has deployed a rhetoric exhorting them to align their asylum system with rights-based norms. Still, in a context of conflicting policy preferences, its funding instruments have not yielded the results that the EU has hoped for. Instruments pushing for Syrian refugee integration and rights have become embroiled in the geopolitical interests of local governing coalitions. Moreover, these instruments must be read in the EU's long-standing trajectory of externalising migration and refugee management in its Southern Neighbourhood (Limam and Del Sarto, 2015). By offering financial and trade incentives to neighbouring states to host, integrate and employ refugees, the EU certainly deflects pressure from its borders. Nonetheless, triangulating its trade and funding power with refugees' integration *from afar* has negatively affected its ability to diffuse rights-based norms. In this light, critics have targeted the EU's refugee instruments in "overburdened states" for their disconnect from refugee preferences and host populations' realities as well as their tendency to "commodify" refugees (Tsourapas, 2019) rather than provide them with a protection environment (Lauten and Nelson-Pollard, 2017).

Notes

- 1 The so-called 2015 refugee crisis refers to the period of summer 2015 and the first quarter of 2016, during which the number of irregular border crossings from Turkey into the European Union has reached around one million. The high number of arrivals is primarily related to conflict and persecution in

Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The refugee crisis resulted in the infamous EU–Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 as described in detail later in the chapter.

- 2 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180314_eu-turkey-two-years-on_en.pdf

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