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# ENC SUMMARY

## ROUNDTABLE POLICY DISCUSSION

### **New trends in migration: a multi-layered perspective**

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Research staff at European Neighbourhood Council (ENC)

This publication is a summary and analysis of the roundtable policy discussion “**New trends in migration: a multi-layered perspective**” which took place in the European Parliament on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, 2018. The event was co-organized by the European Neighbourhood Council (ENC), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and the European Academic Studies Center (EuroAcademic EASC).

**The information in this publication outlines the main points discussed by the expert panellists.**

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## ABOUT THE EVENT

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, the **European Neighbourhood Council (ENC)** co-hosted a roundtable to discuss the new trends and tendencies in today’s migration situation across the European Union (EU) and its wider neighbourhood. The event brought together policy experts and independent practitioners, who laid out the complexities of migration and its policy implications at a local, national and EU-level perspective. The multi-layered perspective was adopted in order to better understand the need for further responsibility sharing among EU member countries and their neighbouring partners.

After the opening remarks by Mr. **Ilhan Kyuchyuk**, ALDE member of the European Parliament, the discussion took place in two panels. The first one featured Mr. **Photis Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis**, political officer in the Turkey Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and Mr. **Ibrahim Kavak**, Director of the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, a Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) based in Ankara. The second panel was composed by ENC’s Director, **Samuel Doveri Vesterbye**, and Ms. **Latifa Ait Baala**, Vice President of Women Movement Reform (MR) & MR International. Both panels were moderated by **Jorge Jesus**, Director of the EU-Turkey Policy Network. The roundtable discussions concluded with the closing remarks made by Mr. **Mustafa Ulusoy**, Director of European Academic Studies Center (EuroAcademic EASC).

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## CONTEXT

The EU legal framework dealing with migration is constituted by the 2013 Dublin III Regulation, a further amended version of the Dublin Convention of 1997. Whether in its original or amended versions, all the Dublin Regulations are based on the principle that the first point-of-entry Member State is responsible for a person's asylum claim. Following the 2015 migration crisis, where the EU saw over one million arrivals through the Mediterranean sea between January 2015 and March 2016, the need for a renewed management of the issue became one of the main priorities of the EU, as the flaws of the Dublin Regulation became increasingly evident.

Unable to amend the Regulation while attempting to stem the flow of migrants arriving to Greece from Turkish shores, heads of state forged the March 18 EU-Turkey statement, also known as the Turkey deal. At its core, the agreement allows Greece to return all irregular migrants to Turkey arriving after March 20. In exchange, the EU resettles Syrian refugees in Europe residing in Turkey (one-for-one policy) and provide a monetary support of €3 billion for Turkey's refugee population, followed by further economic packages.

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## WHERE DO WE STAND?

In his first remarks, **Ilan Kyuchyuk** noted the necessity of approaching migration from a multi-layered perspective in order to understand the phenomenon as a whole. This particular need is rendered essential by the magnitude of the issue today, as 244 million people living outside their home country; an increase from 93 million to 244 million since the 1960s. Such an increase is not only a backlash of international conflicts, but it is also linked to climate change and scarce economic development. Mr. Kyuchyuk recalled the important role of social media in the matter of illegal migration, in that it aids the proliferation of the latter and the smuggling of human beings.

On the other hand, to minimize the negative impact of migration and engage in sustainable development, Mr. Kyuchyuk underlined the need to attract young and highly skilled migrants. The introductory remarks concluded with a reflection upon the generally negative perception of migration during elections in European states, which calls for a general and effective manner to handle migration, not only in Europe, but worldwide.

From the EU's perspective, Mr. **Photis Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis** commented on his particular division dealing with Turkey at the EEAS, explaining that his specific division is both a part of the overall EU engagement with Turkey, and a part of the European agenda for migration. It was established after the Turkish migration crisis in 2015 and still endures today, notwithstanding the turbulence EU-Turkey relations have suffered in recent years. Mr. Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis acknowledged the crucial role played by Turkey in managing the refugee crisis and explained the function and activities of this particular division. Overall, this enhanced cooperation has provided legal and safe paths for migrants towards the EU. In fact, the Turkey division at the EEAS managed to decrease the number of lives lost, which amounted to only 62 in 2017, compared to more than 240 of the previous years. Mr. Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis also highlighted the shortcomings, mainly identified in the slow returns, as only 2150 people were returned from Greece to Turkey in 2016. On the other hand, the most effective tool was identified in the system put in place to support the refugees: €3 billion were committed and contracted by the end of 2017 and 1.9 billion were dispersed to 72 projects that address the needs of Syrian refugees, such as health care, education, and a provision of 120 Turkish lira cash transfer per month for those most in need. To date, it constitutes the largest humanitarian project ever put forward by the EU.

The next implementation report of the project is expected to come out on the 13<sup>th</sup> of

March, a couple of days after the release of the migration report. Mr. Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis specified that no major migrant flows are expected in the near future due to the fact that only refugees in great need will be allowed through the Syrian-Turkish border.

Considering the heavy burden imposed on Turkey vis-a-vis the refugee crisis, Mr. Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis pinpointed the increasing social tensions building in the country. Moreover, even though the main goal is the safe return of Syrian refugees now living in Turkey, they cannot all be expected to return, as some of them have successfully built a new life in the country. Therefore, one of the main objectives must be aiding in successfully integrating Syrian refugees in the Turkish social, economic and educational system. Director **Ibrahim Kavak**, from the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, identified the same lack of integration of the Syrian community within the Turkish society, as 40% of the children still have difficulties accessing education.

Mr. Kavak proceeded in explaining the complexities linked to the EU-Turkey deal reached in 2016: the latter, he stated, did indeed decrease the number of migrants arriving in the EU, while Europe resettled 20,092 Syrian refugees as a result of the deal. However, there is a high number of request applications from non-Syrians, mainly Afghans and Iraqis, some of which don't constitute refugees, but rather seek a better life or educational opportunities. In January 2018, Turkey registered 12,000 non-Syrian arrivals, 72% of which were Afghans and Iraqis. This constitutes the highest rate month Turkey has faced in the last several years, said Mr. Kavak. The main nationalities arriving in the country are: Syrian, Afghan, Pakistan, Iraqi, and also Central Asians. For this reason, the EU statement made to manage the migration flow doesn't constitute a full solution for Mr. Kavak, as it doesn't address the new waves of arrivals.

Mr. Kavak also tackled the complex subject of smugglers aiding migrants to illegally leave Turkey for the EU. In fact, he stated that the Turkish authorities identified a large number of smugglers in the country, but unfortunately an effective border management is extremely difficult, as smugglers are always in search of alternative routes. Such issues raised concerns amongst the audience, who called for greater specifications regarding why this particular problem wasn't better addressed. Mr. Kavak highlighted that, in the present state of things, people don't necessarily need smugglers to illegally pass from Turkey to the EU. With the aid of social media, information regarding the best routes and times to attempt the journey is readily available on smart phones. Moreover, a number of different components increase the difficulty in tackling this issue. For instance, the fact that the Iran-Turkish border and the Mediterranean are difficult to protect; the existence of multiple kinds of smuggling; and the fact that smuggler organizations are mainly situated in the country of origin. On the EU side, Mr. Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis identified the same difficulty regarding the sea borders between Turkey and Greece: the sinuous and porous nature of the latter making it extremely difficult to strictly patrol all smuggling spots simultaneously. This is further complicated by the fact that smugglers usually trace the patrol's position, often evading it.

High-level contributions from the audience included the **Turkish ambassador to the EU, Amb. Faruk Kaymakci**. Amb. Kaymakci mentioned that the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016 deal with the EU, while constituting the “second best deal” Turkey could have obtained, still resulted highly effective. However, in order for the system to fully work, both sides should stick to their commitments. Amb. Kaymakci stated that the EU only partially delivered on the four promises it made in the deal: the “one for one” policy was respected, as the EU has taken more than 10,000 refugees and resettled them in Europe successfully. On the other hand, the acceleration of the funds for Syrian refugees in Turkey was argued by the Ambassador as one of the EU’s shortcomings. Amb. Kaymakci also expressed the hope that the additional €3 billion would soon be allocated to Turkey, and mentioned the need to dedicate the latter to integration and to encouraging returns to their home country. Moreover, a local dimension should be added: municipalities should be involved in the process, as they are aware of the problems that need to be addressed.

Amb. Kaymakci concluded by stating that the deal is proof that the EU and Turkey can successfully achieve results when they cooperate, and noted that such cooperation may spill over into other issues, such as the updating of the Customs Union, the accession negotiations and visa liberalization.

**Samuel Doveri Vesterbye**, Director of ENC, focused on the internal and external dynamics of recent migration trends, and mainly concentrated on three countries: Libya, Jordan and Lebanon. He identified two reasons for why the EU receives migrants today: the short-term explanation is linked to technology, communication and mobility; whilst the long-term explanation is associated to conflict and poverty. Mr. Doveri Vesterbye underlined that the main refugee exporters are countries afflicted by conflicts; with Syrians being the largest asylum seeking population; 23% of which are present in Germany; 25% in Sweden and 39% in Austria since mid-2017. Overall, the figures have decreased enormously in the last year and a half, mainly due to a variety of agreements on migration and mobility signed between the EU and partner countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

Mr. Doveri Vesterbye identified two distinct solutions adopted by the EU to confront the migration and refugee crisis. Firstly, the EU is managing its borders through Frontex, the European Border and Coastguard Agency, Border Guard teams and operation Sophia in the Mediterranean. Secondly, the EU adopts a preventive approach by ensuring stable, prosperous and peaceful relations with its neighbourhood. This is done through a policy of enhancing environmental, social and economic relations between neighbouring countries and Europe. According to a study by Prof. Alexander Betts and ENC Academic Council Member Assistant Prof. Fulya Memisoglu, as of 2018, 90% of refugees reside in developing countries and 60% are based in a group of hosting countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia among others. Mr. Doveri Vesterbye then provided key points from the study regarding the importance of Europe and its trends in dealing with neighbouring and regional partners as a core component of successful and humanitarian migration management.

Jordan constitutes a major hosting refugee nation, towards which the European Commission (EC) has provided funds to aid in managing the refugees. The findings of the aforementioned study suggest that, upon closer inspection at the local Jordanian level, the Mafrac governorate resulted the most open and willing to work on migration, followed by the Sahab and Zarqa district and governorates. In these particular areas, tribal affiliation, the past Syrian role in the area and potential economic opportunities were relevant components that contributed towards achieving successful and open policies towards refugees. These findings are equally relevant for the EU, where refugees sometimes become victims of illegal labour situations, upon leaving the camps or centres where they receive assistance.

The study also highlighted that religious groups play a crucial role in the effectiveness of refugee management in Lebanon, which hosts one million refugees out of a population of only 4.4 million. In particular, Sunni municipalities proved to be the most welcoming communities, while Hezbollah-run Shia municipalities were less inclined to accommodate refugees. Christian municipalities, on the other hand, showed no clear pattern.

The Libyan case proves much more problematic in its relations with the EU: in 2017, the Italian parliament approved a bill for stronger engagement with the Libyan coast guard with the primary objective to fight illegal immigration and smuggling. The latter, however, proved to be a problem for Italy when Human Rights Watch reports identified cases of torture, rape, execution and extortion towards the refugees in Libya in 2017. This put Italy in a difficult position, as signatories of the Geneva Conventions of 1951 and additional protocol of 1967 must abide by the principle of non-refoulement to protect the freedom and safety of refugees.

From the internal perspective, Mr. Doveri Vesterbye focused on new trends in public opinion data concerning migration in Europe. Based on the Gallup Migration Index, he identified three main groups of States in Europe: the most welcoming countries (Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Albania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Ireland and Scandinavia), a second group defined as 'semi-welcoming' (Italy, Portugal, France, Austria, Belgium, UK, Finland), and a third group which proves not so welcoming (Countries to the east of Germany, Austria and Italy, with the exception of Albania). Aside from the differences amongst EU countries, studies suggest that migration remains a top electoral priority and that negative feelings towards non-EU migration is still high, although it has improved since 2016. On the other hand, 69% of EU citizens now favour a common asylum policy. Mr. Doveri Vesterbye concluded by stating that the EU neighbourhood partnerships are essential to the successful, legal and fair handling of migration. The other component being a common European asylum policy and more effective sharing mechanisms among EU states.

Ms. **Latifa Aït Baala**, Vice President of Women MR & MR International, also underlined the lack of unanimity and solidarity among EU countries towards refugees, and noted that the matter remains political crisis rather than a 'refugee' crisis. Ms. Baala explained that more often than not, migration is linked to terrorism and a sense of insecurity. The main

objective of the EU at this time is to stem migration and to that effect has put into place projects in cooperation with the African Union in order to send migrants back to their home countries with the help of the UN. However, very little effort is put into securing their home countries so that they don't face serious risks. Ms. Baala called for a different and more positive approach towards migration amongst EU countries that highlights other aspects of the phenomenon. For example, the EU's need for labour force and issues of aging populations; both policy areas which necessitate a more inclusive migration policy.

According to Ms. Baala, the emphasis should be placed on improved management of the migration flow and the need for Europe to reform the Dublin regulation. In particular, special attention should be dedicated to the most vulnerable groups, namely women and children, which constitute 55% and 27% of migrants.

**Mustafa Ulusoy**, Director of EuroAcademic EASC, closed the discussion by touching upon all topics discussed. In particular, he recalled the importance of Turkey in migration management and the successful cooperation it had with the EU on this issue. Such success should be a reminder of the need for Turkey to become a full member of the EU, he added. Mr. Ulusoy further emphasized the need for the EU to counter the populist tendencies it is experiencing, while preventing these parties to use the refugee crisis for their own agenda and populist electoral gains.

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## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

The situation in Turkey remains one to be addressed. This both concerns migration flows from different nearby regions, while equally including **internal social tensions** rising in the country. In fact, the relationship between the host community and the refugees will be an issue to confront in the next 25 years, highlighted **İbrahim Kavak**. This issue is further exacerbated by the internal migration of the refugee community from the borders of the country towards the West of Turkey in search for better economic opportunities, which has created a higher visibility of the refugee community. The rising tensions will eventually impact the country's policies towards migrants. For this reason, the **Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants** is currently engaged in delivering information to the population to help with the correct interpretation of the phenomenon, in order to prevent stereotypes and hate speech from spreading and increasing. Mr. **Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis** acknowledged the achievement of Turkey for not having let xenophobia become the trend so far, notwithstanding the very high number of refugees living in Turkey. However, Mr. Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis also identified the growing social tensions as the issue which is likely to define Turkey in the coming years. The country will need to address growing needs of the refugee community and direct its efforts towards integration to avoid xenophobia and electoral backlashes.

**Samuel Doveri Vesterbye** noted that the European elections in 2018 will play a vital role in shaping a common European asylum policy and improved migration management. Whereas the Polish and Hungarian elections will prove challenging, the Italian election is

likely to contribute towards a pan-European vision on migration and a reformed European asylum system, due to Italy's particular geographical and migration 'bottleneck' position, which remains a shared concerns for many political parties across the spectrum. Based on current survey results, the Swedish elections in September 2018 are also likely to yield support for further European policy solutions with regards to improved migration and refugee management.

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## CONCLUSION

Speakers in both panels identified the important role played by Turkey and other hosting countries in the management of the regional migration crisis. The discussion mainly focused on Turkey's role and its current situation in relation to the EU and vice versa, although Jordan, Lebanon and Libya were also addressed by ENC Director, **Samuel Doveri Vesterbye**.

The discussion identified the need for the EU to revise the Dublin regulation, as mentioned by Ms. **Latifa Aït Baala**, and achieve a common asylum policy that fits the current and future migration situation. Both Mr. **Ilhan Kyuchyuk** in the opening remarks and Mr. **Mustafa Ulusoy** in the closing remarks advised the EU to overcome its internal differences and confront populist policies inside the EU. Survey results addressed by Mr. Doveri Vesterbye indicate that such trends are likely to occur in 2018 with support from leading countries like Germany.

The EU-Turkey deal was thoroughly discussed from both points of view. In particular, Mr. **Photis Bourloyannis-Tsangaridis** reviewed the role and efficiency of the EU-Turkey deal in providing transfers of refugees to the EU. Both Amb. **Faruk Kaymakci** and Mr. **İbrahim Kavak** underlined that the deal nonetheless fails to address the migration flow Turkey is currently receiving from other regions.

Both sides agreed that the EU-Turkey deal has proven to be effective in the management of the migration crisis and is most likely going to continue. Likewise, successful EU-Lebanon and EU-Jordan cooperation since 2016 in terms of partnerships and mobility, as underlined by Mr. Doveri Vesterbye, have also proven successful. On the other hand, the Libyan cooperation has proven to be difficult and ineffectual, due to Human Rights issues arisen in relation to the inhuman treatment of the refugees in Libya.

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## PARTNERS

The event was co-organised by the European Neighbourhood Council (ENC), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and the European Academic Studies Center (EuroAcademic EASC).