Area of Freedom, Security and Justice

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The 2015 Migration Crisis: A Quick Overview

❖ **Scale of Crisis:**

➢ Approximately 1.3 million people entered and claimed asylum in Europe in 2015.

➢ About half of these refugees were from Syria, with others from countries like Eritrea, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

❖ **Initial Response:**

➢ The EU appeared "paralyzed" at first, with little agreement at the level of the member state.

➢ The crisis quickly evolved from a humanitarian emergency to a political crisis.

➢ The situation strained both external borders and internal EU solidarity.

A Desperate Journey

Breakdown of the Dublin System

❖ **Dublin III Regulation Failure:**

➢ Required asylum seekers to apply in the first EU country of entry.

➢ The system collapsed under pressure as frontline states struggled to process the flood of applications.

➢ Proved largely unsuccessful due to the member state's resistance.

❖ **Germany's Response:**

➢ Suspended Dublin rules for Syrian refugees.

➢ Approximately 890,000 people arrived in Germany seeking asylum in 2015.

➢ Many travelled through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, and Austria to reach Germany.

Refugees at Internal EU Borders Where Dublin Failed

The Solidarity Crisis

Overcrowded Hotspots and Registration Centers in Greece and Italy

❖ **Emergency Measures:**

➤ The council approved the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Greece to Italy.

➤ A "Hotspot" approach was established to help frontline states.

➤ Relocation rates were lower than expected and implemented slowly.

❖ **Member State Opposition:**

➤ Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland refused to implement the EU's asylum system.

➤ Some countries completely rejected sharing the responsibility.

➤ Political conflicts emerged between member states.

Uneven Burden Distribution

Refugees Marching on Europe's Highway

❖ **Geographical Impact**：

➤ Mediterranean states (Italy, Greece) faced disproportionate pressure.

➤ While some states took minimal responsibility, others faced massive arrivals.

➤ Created a crisis in Greece and Italy as refugees were prevented from moving forward.

❖ **Responsibility Disparities**：

➤ Frontline states struggled with registration and processing.

➤ Northern European countries became preferred destinations.

➤ Unequal sharing of responsibility led to blame-shifting among member states.

Long-term Impact on EU Solidarity

Commissioner Johansson Unveils Migration Pact

❖ **Policy Changes**:

➤ New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

➤ New solidarity mechanism, including return sponsorships.

➤ More restricted border controls.

❖ **Ongoing Challenges**:

➤ Deep divisions in the EU's approach to migration.

➤ *Necessities*: a reformed asylum system and permanent solidarity mechanisms.

Where I Stand: Fortress Europe and The Crisis of Solidarity

❖ **Weaknesses in the EU Asylum System**

❖ **Crisis of Solidarity**

❖ **Turn to 'Fortress Europe'**

❖ **Limiting access vs limiting rights**

❖ **Uneven application of asylum principles**

❖ **'Fortress Europe' Trade-offs**

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum

- Adopted by European Parliament and Council in June 2024

- Enters into application in 2026

- Replaces outdated and fragmented systems (e.g. Dublin III Regulation)

- Seeks to create a comprehensive, unified framework for:
  - Border control

  - Asylum procedures

  - Migration partnerships

  - Solidarity among EU countries

The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum

European Movement Ireland
March 2024

Why Was the Pact Needed?
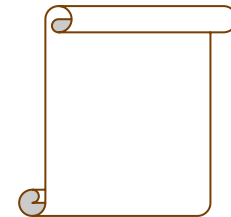
- 2015: around 1.3 million asylum seekers arrived (mainly Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis)

- The Dublin III system collapsed — forced first-entry states to bear the brunt

- Many asylum seekers moved across borders despite EU rules

- EU Council's relocation plan (quotas) was adopted—but ignored by countries like Hungary, Poland

- Result: Breakdown of trust, political fragmentation, and selective solidarity

Goals of the New Pact

- Manage migration in a firm but fair way, aligned with EU values

- Prevent crisis-driven responses by introducing predictable procedures

- Ensure strong external borders to manage who enters

- Promote solidarity and shared responsibility among all EU states

- Guarantee rights and protection for those in need

- Enable legal migration pathways through cooperation with third countries

Pillar	Key Features	Objective
1. Secure External Borders	- Mandatory screening (ID, health, security) - Expanded Eurodac database (biometrics) - Accelerated border procedures - Crisis Regulation for emergency support	Strengthen control and coordination at EU external borders
2. Fast and Efficient Procedures	- Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) - Qualification Regulation	Speed up and standardize asylum processing across Member States

Pillar	Key Features	Objective
3. Solidarity and Responsibility	• Permanent Solidarity Mechanism • Flexible contributions: relocation, financial aid, operational support, or responsibility offsets • Prevents secondary movement of asylum seekers	Ensure fair burden-sharing among Member States
4. International Partnerships	• Anti-smuggling cooperation with third countries • Frontex support for returns • Readmission agreements • Legal migration via Talent Pool & Partnerships	Address root causes and promote legal migration pathways

How the Pact Builds Solidarity?

Let us build together a Global Pact of Solidarity for Migrant and Refugee Rights!
Sign on to the statement!

#GlobalSolidarityPact
#SolidarityPactMigrantsRefugees

- No return to mandatory relocation quotas

- Instead, a menu of contributions:
  - Relocate, fund, support, assist

- Ensures frontline countries like Greece and Italy are not abandoned

- Backed by EU agencies and funds

- Tries to rebuild trust among states after years of tension

Challenges and Critiques

- Human Rights Watch: Frontex accused of pushbacks, abuse at borders

- Critics say Pact increases securitisation of migration

- Lack of binding relocation may repeat past failures

- Still a risk of unequal burden on border states

- Ongoing debate: Security vs. Rights in EU migration policy

Comparative Analysis of Migrant and Asylum Seeker Treatment in the EU

	Ukrainian Asylum Seekers	Middle Eastern Asylum Seekers	Relevant EU Regulation/Legal Basis
Legal Status Recognition	Immediate activation of Temporary Protection Directive	Prolonged asylum determination process (often years)	Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC) / Dublin III Regulation (604/2013)
Residence Permit	Automatic 1-year renewable permit, instant processing	Complex application process, frequent rejections	Council Directive 2003/9/EC, Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU
Work Permit	Immediate full labor market access	Restricted work permits, lengthy authorization process	Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU)
Healthcare Access	Comprehensive healthcare coverage	Limited emergency care, restricted access to regular healthcare	EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 35
Education Access	Immediate integration into educational systems	Complicated enrollment, language and documentation barriers	Council Directive 2003/9/EC, Education Support Regulations
Social Welfare	Full access to social security systems	Minimal social support, conditional aid	Social Security Coordination Regulation (883/2004)

	Ukrainian Asylum Seekers	Middle Eastern Asylum Seekers	Relevant EU Regulation/Legal Basis
Family Reunification	Simplified, expedited process	Strict, complex, and often impossible procedures	Family Reunification Directive (2003/86/EC)
Border Crossing	Unrestricted entry, minimal documentation	Heavy border controls, detailed screening	Schengen Borders Code (EU) 2016/399
Financial Support	Direct EU and national financial assistance	Limited humanitarian aid, project-based support	EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)
Detention Practices	No detention, humanitarian approach	High rates of detention, containment centers	Returns Directive (2008/115/EC)
Relocation Mechanism	Voluntary, moderately restricted relocation	Mandatory quotas, frequently ignored by member states	Council Decisions (EU) 2015/1601 and 2015/1523

Middle Eastern Asylum Seekers (Mediterranean Route)

- prolonged and complex asylum processes
- significant challenges in: legal entry mechanisms; integration support; humanitarian protection
- Subjected to more restrictive border control measures
- Encountered substantial bureaucratic obstacles in asylum applications
- Experienced limited solidarity mechanisms within EU member states

Ukrainian Asylum Seekers (Post-2022 Invasion)

- Immediate activation of Temporary Protection Directive (2022)
- Rapid legal status recognition
- Immediate access to: Labor market; Healthcare; Education
- Minimal bureaucratic barriers to the basic needs
- Widespread public and institutional support

Institutional Double Standards

	Ukrainian Asylum Seekers	Middle Eastern Asylum Seekers
Speed of Response	Immediate protection and integration	Prolonged, complex asylum procedures
Humanitarian Protection	Comprehensive, immediate protection	Restricted access, limited humanitarian corridors
Burden-Sharing Mechanisms	Demonstrated effective EU-wide solidarity	Fragmented, uneven state responses

Legal and Policy Context

Dublin III Regulation

(Regulation No. 604/2013)

- Established criteria for determining responsible member state for asylum claims
- Primarily placed burden on first-entry countries (Greece, Italy)
- Created systematic bottlenecks in asylum processing

- Intensified border control mechanisms driven by **Frontex** operations
- EU-Turkey Deal of March 2016, which allocated **€6 billion** to Turkey for refugee containment
- Limited humanitarian corridors
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 aimed to relocate **160,000** asylum seekers from Greece and Italy, but only managed **35,000**, due to refusal of some countries, like **Hungary** and **Poland**

Legal and Policy Context

Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC)

- activated for the first time in February 2022

- providing an immediate, comprehensive protection mechanism

- issuance of automatic 1-year renewable residence permits

- access to the labor market, healthcare coverage, educational integration

- The burden sharing between the EU countries was efficient and proactive

- Perceived cultural similarity lead to wider societal and institutional support

Comparison by country:

	Middle Eastern Asylum Seekers	**Ukrainian Asylum Seekers**
France	- Strict integration tests - Limited social benefits - Prolonged asylum procedures	- Streamlined residence permits - Full social security access - Education integration support
Germany	- Complex asylum evaluation - Limited family reunification - Restricted welfare access	- Immediate welfare support - Simplified family reunification - Direct financial assistance
Poland	- Complete rejection at eastern border - Militarized border control - No humanitarian corridors	- Immediate humanitarian support - Open border policy - Comprehensive integration programs
Hungary	- Nearly total rejection of asylum claims - Strict border fences, pushbacks at the Serbian border, transit zones - Criminalization of irregular entry - Minimal legal aid and asylum access	- Immediate protection, open borders - Fast access to jobs, healthcare, and education - Financial and social support programs

Questions for debate:

What do you think are the reasons for those double standards emerging?

Do you think the pact is going to be successful in 2026 and why?

How do you perceive the crisis of solidarity playing out in the civil arena, as opposed to the political one?