

## Solutions to the European Migration Crisis

### Overview

Migrant arrivals in Europe, which peaked in 2015 when over one million migrants and refugees crossed the Mediterranean fleeing instability and violence in the Middle East and northern Africa, have declined significantly since the migrant flow first became branded as a “crisis.” The debate within the EU about how to accommodate these migrants, though, has done anything but.



In this graphic, black numbers represent migrant flow in 2015, while blue numbers represent migrant flow in 2018, demonstrating the decrease in migrant flow. Graphic from Infomigrants.

Many “first stop” nations—namely Italy, Greece, Malta, Hungary, and other southern European nations—argue that the rest of the EU should do more to distribute the responsibility of housing migrants. Perhaps this is for good reason: migration centers in Greece and Italy are struggling with over-capacity in camps that were never equipped to meet migrant needs. The nations that have since increased their acceptance of migrants, such as Germany and France, have also called for reform that would hold all member states accountable in addressing the “crisis.” There has been much debate about solutions since the advent of the migration crisis in 2015, and several differing strategies have since been formulated.

### Sides of the Issue

The EU’s existing migration regulation—the Dublin Agreement—has proven itself insufficient at best in mitigating the current crisis. Though it requires that migrants are allowed to stay in the country in which they’ve filed asylum while their request is being processed, there is no requirement for what accommodations are provided. Thus, the ill-equipped and often dangerous conditions in Italian and Greek migrant camps were allowed to persist.

Perhaps the most shocking example of these atrocious conditions can be found in Greece’s Moria refugee camp, where 13,000 migrants inhabit a camp intended to house only

3,000. Due to the overcrowding, most of the camp's residents live in patchwork tents outside of the camp's walls, where they have little to no access to running water, electricity, or food. Fights over a share of these precious resources, sexual harassment left unaddressed by limited law enforcement, and slow response to emergencies plague refugees each day they stay in the camp. What's worse, refugees are often forced to live in these conditions for months at a time while their asylum applications are processed.

Italy and Greece have not been entirely complacent in this negligence, though: they have repeatedly called upon their fellow member states to provide aid or to accept migrant transfers, acknowledging their inability to help so many with limited resources. Recent legislation backed by France, Germany, Italy, and Malta seeks to address this issue by mandating "automatic" redistribution of migrants, but such legislation is unlikely to pass. One reason for this is the formation of the "Visegrád Group" comprised of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland which oppose immigration on the grounds of it threatening their culture, and will likely reject the notion of compulsory acceptance of migrants.

Thus, several "blocs" have formed in the realm of immigration regulation. The Visegrád Group is opposed by more liberal Western European nations, chiefly Sweden and Germany, who have traditionally embraced immigration. Though the far-right is on the rise in nearly every EU member state, Sweden and Germany remain champions of the "open door" tenant that was once the rallying cry of the EU.

Regardless of which solution to the migration crisis is agreed upon, the focus should be the protection of migrant rights. Deaths in the Mediterranean continue, abuse and inadequate accommodations persist in migrant camps, and migrants are forced to work in horrible conditions to get by. If the EU seeks to maintain its position as a global leader on the front of human rights, it has strides to make in its own borders to reclaim its authority.



A protest over the conditions in Greek migrant camps. Photo from The National Herald.

### **Questions to Consider for Debate**

1. Is it the responsibility of EU member states to share the responsibility of harboring migrants? If so, is it possible for this be done so that all member states contribute to the solution without sacrificing their national identity? Or, should national identity come second to identity as an EU member state?
2. How can the migration crisis be mitigated so that “first stop” nations don’t have to stretch their resources so thin? Is migrant redistribution the answer, or are there other potential solutions?
3. What can be done now to stop the human rights violations that currently exist in migrant camps? Should this be a separate priority or a byproduct of the legislation that solves the crisis at large?

## Sources

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