

*"The EU answer to the humanitarian migratory crisis in the Mediterranean",*

Constança Urbano de Sousa, University Autónoma of Lisbon

Abstract

The Euro-Mediterranean region has always been an area of significant migratory movements. Irregular migration across the Mediterranean Sea is an endemic phenomenon for more than 20 years. Since 2011, an increasing number of people fleeing from Syria, Iraq, Libya, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, Gambia, and even Afghanistan, Bangladesh are trying to reach EU through the Mediterranean Sea. The growing numbers of people fleeing insecurity, political instability, human rights violations and poverty in Middle East and in sub-Saharan Africa affects not only the EU, but also the entire Euro-Mediterranean region, resulting in humanitarian crises and creating sustained migratory pressure. Alone the conflict in Syria has originated almost 4 million refugees in the Region, affecting in particular neighbouring countries, like Turkey (1,7 million Syrian refugees), Lebanon (1,2 million) and Jordan (628.160). Despite the increasing numbers, only a limited number of Syrian who fled the conflict have sought asylum in Europe (253.859).

The Central Mediterranean Sea is one of the main routes for illegal border crossing into the EU (60% of all detections in 2014). But it is also the most dangerous border in the world, in which thousands of people have lost their lives trying to enter the EU. Until 2015, at least 18.500 people died in the attempt to reach EU by sea, half of them were recorded after 2011. This phenomena gained particular visibility in 3 October 2013, when at least 360 people lost the lives in Lampedusa. Following this tragic incident, the Task Force Mediterranean was set up, to take action to prevent irregular migration across the Mediterranean and the loss of lives at sea. Despite EU efforts, 2014 at least 3279 people died and alone in the first 4 months 2015, ca 1800 people lost the lives in the Mediterranean Sea. The drowning of 800 migrants, 19 April 2015, was only the last tragic incident that gives to this phenomenon a regained political visibility as a humanitarian crisis. This crisis triggered a set of measures at EU level, like the reinforcing borders control, a EU military operation to disrupt the business model of migrant smuggling in the Southern Central Mediterranean or the proposals for a relocation and resettlement schemes within the European Agenda on Migration. This paper will focus on the evaluation of the effectiveness of those measures to address the humanitarian migratory crisis in the Mediterranean and the need for a new policy to address the challenges posed by migration and asylum.