



**MAGYC**  
Migration Governance and Asylum Crises

**Externalization Policies and their  
Impacts on Migrant and  
Refugee Flows to Europe in  
Times of Crisis:  
A preliminary study**

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**MAGYC:** The MAGYC (**Migr**Ation **G**overnance and **AsYlum C**risis) project seeks to assess how migration governance has responded to the recent “refugee crises” and has since been influenced by it, and how crises at large shape policy responses to migration. This four-year research project (2018–2022) brings together twelve international partners: the Hugo Observatory from the University of Liège (Coordinator), Sciences Po, the University of Economics in Bratislava, the GIGA institute of Global and Area Studies, Lund University, the IDMC, SOAS University of London, the University of Milan, the Lebanese American University, the University of Macedonia, Sabancı University, IfPO/CNRS.

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## D8.1. Externalization Policies

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## Executive Summary

In the past two decades European states have increasingly sought to stem irregular migration to Europe by cooperating with non-European countries to manage migration and asylum beyond European borders and territories. This process, commonly referred to as *externalization*, amounts to delegating migration regulation, border control, and asylum determinations to third countries. This can occur through the enabling of deportations of irregular migrants through readmission agreements (RA), as well as through other policy instruments such as aid and development packages that address the drivers of migration in origin and transit countries. The variety of externalization policies, of both a formal and informal nature, are geared towards stemming irregular migration and organizing orderly migration and asylum under governmental supervision. It is unclear, however, whether or under what conditions such policies have had their intended effects. Through our research, we aim to measure how migrant and refugee flows respond to such European externalization of migration and asylum management. Our analyses cover the period from 2008 to 2020, which offers a unique context in which to study the relationship between migration policies and flows in times of mass inflows characterized as a “migrant” or “refugee crisis.”

After a literature review regarding migration policies and externalization, we introduce a new database on European external migration policies. We then use Frontex data to describe the patterns in “irregular border crossings” (IBCs), focusing on the spatial and categorical distribution of migrants and refugees from 2009 to 2020. We introduce a useful distinction between “likely irregular migrants” and “likely refugees,” who both cross borders without prior authorization into Europe. Overall, we estimate that roughly 54% of all IBCs identified between 2009 and 2020 can be classified as likely refugees. Moreover, during the 2015 peak in crossings, our estimate rises to 75.5% of all IBCs. We then discuss the dispersion of migration flows by nationality across routes. We show that dispersion across routes is limited to a few nationalities which are unlikely to obtain asylum in Europe while “likely refugees” tend to remain concentrated on one route. Thus, we hypothesize that externalization policies, although partially effective at reducing the overall number of irregular border crossings into Europe, may have a more profound impact on “likely refugees” who potentially remain stranded in transit countries or who renounce fleeing their country of origin.

In turn, we present key policy trends across European states and third countries with respect to externalization. We argue that the 2015 crisis reinforced existing dynamics of diplomatic engagement and cooperation

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with third countries in matters of migration and asylum. Externalization policies extended their geographical scope, level of cooperation and type of policies, notably drifting towards more informal instruments of cooperation.

Finally, we present an initial examination of the impact of policies on irregular flows. Focusing on the impact of readmission agreements, we contend that bilateral agreements are not effective in limiting migration from the signing countries of origin. However, we also observe that bilateral implemented protocols of EU readmission agreements (EURA) are associated with fewer irregular border crossings from the relevant countries of origin. We suggest that this effect can be explained by pre-existing political relations between the parties to the EURAs and the limited number of irregular border crossers from the relevant nationalities. Overall, our findings call into question the appropriateness of externalization policies as tools for addressing migration issues, in particular large refugee flows in times of crisis.

### 1. Introduction

From the Maastricht treaty onward, migration and asylum issues have emerged as a new “policy domain” for the European Union (EU) (Guiraudon, 2003). Both through incremental *acquis communautaire*, constitutional reforms, and foreign engagement in migration-related cooperation, migration and asylum have progressively become central to European policy-making. Alongside intra-European migration regulation via the Schengen Agreement and related EU policies, this domain has progressively sought to advance the coordination of border and visa policies, asylum procedures, and the fight against irregular immigration. In terms of content, the political dynamics that have characterized this emerging policy domain have been (1) the growing securitization of migration discourses (Buonfino, 2004) and migration practices and policies (Bigo, 2001; Léonard, 2010), as well as (2) the progressive “externalization” of migration and asylum management, which was until recently considered to be an almost exclusively “domestic” domain of national politics.<sup>6</sup>

This report explores the impact on migration flows of this externalization, understood here as the increasingly coordinated and progressively Europeanized projection of European migration and asylum policies and politics beyond EU borders. Externalization consists of a set of policy and cooperation instruments that seek to impact migration and asylum flows *extraterritorially*, (far) beyond EU borders, within territories in which the EU and its member states effectively *offshore* migration and asylum management. These policies emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, have grown substantially and most notably following the 2015 “migration crisis.” They have come to encompass an increasing number of partner countries, to target both irregular and regular migration as well as asylum, and to rely upon a growing

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<sup>6</sup> As Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009) have stated: “the deepening integration in traditional fields of domestic politics such as environmental, competition or *immigration* policy are also rapidly developing an external dimension, which consists in the attempt to transfer the EU’s rules and policies to third countries and international organizations” [emphasis added].

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variety of instruments that seek to lower irregular migration. Irrespective of their growth, the objectives behind these policies have remained constant within a spectrum that ranges from addressing the structural causes of emigration (often called “root causes”) to deterring emigrants from leaving their countries of origin, to containing migration in third countries of transit, to preventing unauthorized border crossings, and to enabling the deportation of irregular migrants identified in Europe. The protection of migrants and asylum seekers has also featured as an objective of externalization policies, and this dimension became prominent during the mass inflows of refugees and asylum seekers after the revolutions of the “Arab Spring” in the early 2010s, creating political contradictions within externalization dynamics (Triandafyllidou & Dimitriadi, 2014) and “considerable tension with the prohibitions of refoulement and of collective expulsion” (Spijkerboer, 2016). In several reports (Crépeau, 2013, 2015), the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations (UN) on the Human Rights of Migrants has flagged externalization policies as a human rights concern, particularly in times of mass inflows of forcibly displaced populations.

The literature on externalization has likewise grown exponentially in recent years,<sup>7</sup> especially since the 2015 crisis, feeding discussions on multilevel governance, securitization, conditionality, venue-shopping, securitization, privatization, and neo-colonialism as well as expanding through different disciplines, including international relations, comparative politics, foreign policy studies, European integration studies, critical border studies, political geography, and beyond. Both the politics and policies of externalization have been the subject of numerous scientific publications<sup>8</sup> as well as policy oriented reports (Carrera & Stefan, 2020; Ruhs et al., 2019), but their impact remains a point of contention between political actors and institutions within the EU, in certain cases pitting the Parliament (Garcia Andrade & Martin, 2012) against

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<sup>7</sup> This refers to the number of research studies that deal with externalization. The IMISCOE Migration Research Hub includes more than 200 references dealing with *extra-territorialisation*, of which three-fourths have been published in the last decade. An elementary bibliographical search indicates that the number of publications dealing with the multifaceted dimensions of externalization is even higher.

<sup>8</sup> Literature review below describes this research in detail.

the Commission and the Council, between EU and civil society actors such as human-rights NGOs (Akkerman, 2018; Frelick et al., 2016) and within academia (Faist, 2019). Controversies and policy challenges stem in part from the tension from competing objectives in contexts of “mixed flows” that combine irregular migration, refugee flows, and smuggled populations (Van Hear, 2009), pitting security and reducing irregular migration against protection of refugees.

While European policy-makers have consistently supported externalization as means for migration management, including in the context of the 2015 crisis, the main critiques of externalization either emphasize their negative impact on people's rights and their political costs for Europe and partner countries,<sup>9</sup> or highlight “the lack of evidence on the impact and efficiency of EU funding regarding the objectives of the migration policy” (Garcia Andrade & Martin, 2012).

**Building on existing research, this report seeks to describe externalization policy dynamics and assess the impact of externalization policies upon migration flows during and after the crisis of 2015. As such, it seeks to fill an evidence gap at the center of heated political and scientific controversies.**

We use the 2015 “migration/refugee crisis” as a key point of observation. The mass inflows of people on the move into Europe in 2015 put the Europeanisation and externalization of migration politics to the test as increased arrivals at EU borders challenged the rationale of externalization policies. The mass arrival of asylum seekers led to the reinforcement of externalization in EU discourses and policy frameworks, notably concerning border controls and irregular migration management, despite the fact that the specific drivers of these flows constituted ongoing and escalating conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Nevertheless, the large inflows in 2015 were not

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<sup>9</sup> Critique on the politics of externalization generally consider that externalization policies make “Migration routes become ever more dangerous; Fuel human rights abuses outside Europe; lead to support dictatorships and repression; Undermine development and stability; Divert of development funds and priorities; Practice neocolonialism; Ignore African positions” (Akkerman, 2018, pp. 32–40).

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exclusively connected to flows from contiguous or nearby states experiencing long-standing political crises, wars, and/or instability (Afghanistan since 2001, Iraq since 2003, Somalia since 1991, Eritrea since 1962, South Sudan since 2013, Yemen since 2009, etc.), but also to migration routes traversing Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Maghreb, and North Africa, raising concerns of potentially increasing irregular migration.

We thus consider that the 2015 crisis offers a unique point of observation of European migration policies and the impact they have on population movements. As has often been highlighted in recent research (Crawley et al., 2017; Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2016; Lindley, 2014), the 2015 crisis was socially and politically constructed in the wake of mass inflows of migrants and asylum seekers across EU borders and it activated political imaginaries, discourses, and practices that were often unbalanced in relation to the actual flows touching the various member states (Cantat et al., 2020).

The research discussed in this report seeks to bridge the gap between two streams of literature on migration and asylum policies, and notably on externalization, which are rarely in dialogue: a “critical” stance - coming from critical IR and migration studies - that often focuses on migration policies as social constructs and speech acts that have constructed immigration and asylum as “problems,” (focusing on the drivers and nature of policies), with a “positivist” stance that seeks to quantify the impact of policies on flows and their effectiveness (or lack thereof). Referring to political economy and rational choice theory on the one hand with institutionalism and critical migration theory on the other hand, we pursue Boswell's (2007) suggestion to pursue a “third way” of research, straddling positivist attempts to measure policy effectiveness with a quantitative approach with critical studies, based on qualitative work, which examines the discourses behind and content of migration policies.

Our main contributions and findings are:

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1. We create a comprehensive dataset of externalization policies, thereby offering robust empirical grounds for a detailed description of policy trends and regression analyses of their effects on migration flows.
2. We critically and constructively engage with statistics on migrant flows, addressing the issue of mixed-migration and presenting an innovative analysis of flows as constituted of “likely refugees” and “likely irregular migrants.” Moreover, we likewise examine the potential “rerouting” of migrants across different paths to Europe by evaluating the dispersion and concentration of flows over time and across routes given the countries of origin of migrants. In this vein, we find that externalization policies that target the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes to Europe potentially disproportionately affect likely refugees who are no longer crossing the EU’s external borders, but who either remain stranded in transit countries or remain at risk of persecution in their countries or origin.
3. As a first step toward a broader analysis of the impact of externalization policies on migrant flows, we highlight key policy trends regarding the development of externalization policies in the last two decades, and we specifically assess the impact of readmission agreements on flows to Europe. We find that bilateral readmission agreements do not significantly impact irregular border crossings, but that readmission agreements signed with the EU which are implemented by member states through bilateral implementing protocols are associated with fewer irregular border crossings from the relevant countries of origin. This effect can be explained by pre-existing political relations between the parties to the EU readmission agreements and the limited number of irregular border crossers associated with these nationalities. At the same time, we also point out that these policies can impact likely refugees as much as likely irregular migrants even though - consistent with the formal policy obligations of EU states to protect refugees while deterring

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irregular migrants - likely refugees should not be impacted by these measures.

Overall, this report presents the research design and preliminary findings of the broader study tied to Work Package 8.1 of the EU Horizon 2020 funded Migration Governance and Asylum Crises (MAGYC) project. The remainder is structured as follows. First, we explore the current state of the art regarding research on migration policies and externalization. Here we position our research question and methodology within an interdisciplinary field of study on the impact or efficiency of migration policies. Second, we discuss our approach, methodology, and sources in detail. In this section, we specifically provide a definition of externalization, identify those policy instruments which serve as the focus of the initial steps of our research, and discuss the data we use in our analyses. Third, we conduct a detailed analysis of migration flows to Europe, focusing on irregular border crossings identified by the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). In particular, we develop an innovative evaluation of irregular border crossings (IBCs) as constituting "likely refugees" and "likely irregular migrants" given the weighted average of rejection rates on asylum applications based on applicant nationalities across Europe. Fourth, we turn the focus to trends in externalization, presenting a novel dataset of externalization instruments, as well as our findings from a preliminary statistical analysis of the relationship between readmission agreements - the most prominent tool of externalization - and migrant flows to Europe. Finally, we conclude by discussing the next steps for our research.

### **2. State of the Art: Researching Migration Policies**

Most of the literature on migration politics has focused on describing their nature and evolution, identifying the drivers behind their adoption, and evaluating their effects on migrants and societies. In this section, we evaluate this research, identifying relevant past findings with respect to migration policies in general and the "externalization" of migration cooperation in

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particular. While we do not aim to provide an exhaustive literature review, we seek to situate our research within the vast number of past studies on migration policies and their effects, as well as to demonstrate the need for continued evaluation of how policies affect migration flows.

First, past **descriptive work on migration policies and politics** has demonstrated that these policies involve multiple actors and institutions and span policy sectors and levels of governance (Carrera et al., 2019; Cornelius et al., 1994; Kunz et al., 2011), making for a complex policy domain that involves an array of actors and institutions. However, research on the diplomatic dimension of migration policies (or migration diplomacies) remains limited (Adamson, 2006; Glasius, 2018; Thiollet, 2011; Tsourapas, 2017), and is mostly recent, with a few exceptions such as Myron Weiner's early work in the 1980s (Weiner, 1985). Additionally, research has demonstrated that it is imperative to highlight the difference between discourses, policies on paper, policy implementation, and outcomes such as migration flows (Lavenex, 2016; Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

The study described in this report advances descriptive research on both migrant policies and flows. First, by developing a new dataset of external migration policies of the EU, we provide a more robust and detailed understanding of the development of the externalization of migration control and transnational cooperation on migration issues. Most existing policy datasets provide empirical evidence to describe the types of instruments or measures (policy outputs) and the content (substance, or relative openness or restrictiveness) of policies. However, they usually do not include data on migration flows to avoid endogeneity issues and maintain methodological robustness (Scipioni & Urso, 2017). Studies relying upon these datasets or indices have consistently found that (1) there are a variety of policy instruments adopted by states that are informal or formal and that are located at various levels of governance, as well as that, (2) over time, while policies have generally not become more restrictive overall (Beine et al., 2016; de Haas et al., 2018; Helbling et al., 2017), they have tended to become more selective

with regards to the migrants targeted by policy tools (de Haas et al., 2018). However, these quantitative datasets have typically restricted their coverage to European or OECD countries and have not included the most recent period, making them unsuitable for an assessment of the development and impacts of migration policies during periods of crisis.<sup>10</sup> Our study thus fills an empirical gap in existing migration policy research by developing a dataset that codes migration policies of EU and non-EU countries from 2002 to 2018.

Second, our work is most directly tied to past studies on **the impact of policies on flows**. In this regard, the literature has yet to identify clear results that can be generalized. Scholars have tried to isolate the role of policies as drivers of immigration flows (emigration policies have attracted relatively little attention) from other economic or social determinants which have been extensively studied by sociologists and economists. Some find strong evidence of the relative ineffectiveness of immigration policies, arguing that their impacts “are relatively small compared to other social, economic, and political determinants” (Czaika & de Haas, 2013). Refugee flows are also considered to “lie largely beyond the reach of asylum policy-makers” (Thielemann, 2004: 1). Other types of policies (labour market regulation, trade policies, etc.) are often deemed to affect immigration flows more than migration policies themselves (Markaki, 2015). Several seminal studies try to explain this ostensible policy “failure” (Castles, 2004; Joppke, 1998).

This issue is classically called a “hypothesis gap,” following Rosenblum and Cornelius’s (2012) terminology, which predicts a divergence between popular demands for restrictive migration policies and less restrictive immigration policy outputs and outcomes. Hollifield (1992) argues along similar lines that such “gap” constitutes a “liberal paradox,” pitting the liberal (open) migration preferences of market actors against the anti-immigration stances

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<sup>10</sup> The Determinants of Migration (DEMIG) database covers 45 countries among which 27 in Europe, 8 in America, 6 in Asia, 4 in Africa from 1945 until 2011 (de Haas et al., 2018). The IMPIC database covers all OECD states between 1980 and 2010 (Helbling et al., 2017). The IMPALA database covers nine countries between 1999 and 2008 (Beine et al., 2016).

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of voters.<sup>11</sup> Some even argue that state borders are broadly “beyond control” (Bhagwati, 2003) and that states have lost their sovereignty over migration flows (Sassen, 2015). Others find that policies do impact flows (Helbling & Leblang, 2019) with a particular focus on border controls and integration within societies (Brochmann & Hammar, 1999; Geddes, 2001; Guiraudon & Joppke, 2001). Studies using large cross-country indices seem to offer contradictory evidence but they mostly fail to clarify whether there is an “efficacy gap” or “proof of efficacy” and why (Czaika & de Haas, 2013).

Our research contributes to this long standing debate regarding policy effects. We choose to focus on the external dimension of migration policies and their impact at EU borders, with the ambition to expand our inquiry at a later stage, in particular by examining the impact of policies on irregular migration in transit countries. Our empirical analysis uses policy variables and identifies correlations with “irregular border crossings” (IBCs) identified by Frontex. In doing so, we acknowledge that migration is a continuous transnational phenomenon, that flows are dependent upon many contexts “en route,” and that EU externalization policies and practices (formal and informal) may or may not matter. For this reason, we focus on flows along migration routes, and lay the grounds for a future geographically sensitive model that assesses the impact of externalization policies.

From this viewpoint our work is closely related to the studies in economics on the impact of border and migration policies on irregular flows or asylum flows. A first strand of this literature has focused on the determinants of asylum seekers and refugee flows. Using a gravitational approach, this literature finds significant effects of asylum policies in European destination countries on the choice of location of asylum seekers (Beine et al., 2016; Bertoli et al., 2013), as

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<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Hollifield argues that “states are trapped in a “liberal paradox” [...]. Since the end of World War II, international economic forces (trade, investment, and migration) have been pushing states towards greater openness, while the international state system and powerful (domestic) political forces push states towards greater closure. This is a liberal paradox because it highlights some of the contradictions inherent in liberalism, which is the quintessentially modern political and economic philosophy and a defining feature of globalization.” (Hollifield, 2004, p. 884).

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well as strong expected effects of conflicts and civil liberties on flows of refugees, in addition to other push factors such as population and economic growth (Echevarria-Coco & Gardeazabal, 2020). At the same time, there is limited evidence that foreign aid directly affects these flows apart from through its long run effects on economic growth (Dreher et al., 2019).

A second strand of economics literature has estimated the responsiveness of migration flows to the increasing restrictions implemented in most OECD countries over the past few decades. These studies generally find that border controls have limited effects on the overall flows of irregular migrants (Hanson, 2006; Zavodny & Orrenius, 2016), although they can lead to the reorientation of flows to more dangerous routes, to the death of more migrants, and to the reorganization of the smuggling market with higher prices paid by migrants (Gathmann, 2008). However, more recent studies show some deterrence effects on flows (Bazzi et al., 2020; Bohn & Pugatch, 2015), as well as some effects on choice of points of entry and destination (Allen et al., 2018). While the literature has focused initially on the migration of Mexican workers to the US, for which relatively reliable data is available, there has been a recent diversification of empirical studies examining the unintended consequences of the border controls between Africa and Europe on deaths in the Mediterranean (Deiana et al., 2020) or on the Spanish-African border (Carling, 2007a). Moreover, Friebel et al. (2018) focus on migrant flows to Europe following the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011 and estimate the elasticity of intentions to migrate illegally given smuggling costs, considering the exogenous shock represented by this political event.

In this line of quantitative studies, Fasani and Frattini (2021) focus on the effects of investments into border controls by the European agency Frontex on the flows of irregular migrants to Europe. Our study uses the same data regarding irregular border crossings to Europe and offers an analysis of other policy instruments used by European countries to reduce irregular migration. Since border controls may be regarded as one specific dimension of multifaceted and multipurpose externalization policies, our results are

complementary to theirs. The channels through which Frontex efforts affect the flows of irregular migrants by pushing them back before they reach Europe substantially differ from those of readmission agreements and other policies we scrutinize, such that their effects are likely to be different. Moreover, understanding the effects of externalization policies necessitates a consideration of their multifaceted nature, as well as of counterparts of border enforcement measures, such as visa liberalization and development aid.

Finally, due to identification issues and data limitations, there is a gap in the literature regarding the interlinkages between asylum seeker flows and irregular migrant flows. Studying the determinants of the growing flows of asylum seekers in Europe, Hatton (2017, p. 450) has concluded that “asylum policies have had an important influence on the volume of asylum applications, especially those relating to border control.” Building upon the general public hostility to irregular migration (Ruhs et al., 2019), he argues that policies targeting irregular migration are incidentally affecting those who irregularly cross borders to seek asylum for lack of other options. Thus, asylum policies affect irregular migration flows and vice-versa. Our work attempts to fill this gap by looking at some interaction effects between externalization policies and asylum policies to evaluate possible differential impacts on individuals likely to obtain asylum in Europe (likely refugees) and those unlikely to obtain protection even if they applied (likely irregular migrants).

### **3. Approach, Methodology and Sources**

In this study, **we bridge qualitative and quantitative migration policy analyses and build upon two main disciplines - political science and economics - using both positivist and critical stances.** As critical migration and security studies have shown, existing statistical data on migration reflect legal categories which are politically constructed and thus dependent on the content of public policies. As such, these studies allow us to engage more fully with issues tied to the definition of migration flows and their endogenous relationship to policies. Although we code statistical migration policy data, we

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remain aware of the analytical importance of the normative dimensions of statistical categories, such as the category of “irregular migrants,” and the multifarious nature of policy instruments and political incentives. In this section, remaining cognizant of the challenges in developing a comprehensive and normatively neutral database, we present and discuss the coding of our policy dataset and the migration statistics we use in our analyses. We subsequently present our research design and how we analyze the impacts of policies on migration flows.

### Defining Externalization Policies

At present, there is no widely agreed definition of externalization and no comprehensive list of externalization policy instruments. Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009, p. 791) offer an often-cited and functional definition that considers externalization as “the attempt to transfer the EU’s rules and policies (*acquis communautaire*) to third countries and international organizations.” However, scholars emphasizing the politics of externalization tend to understand externalization as the various policy instruments and political initiatives implemented in destination countries and developed in cooperation with migrant countries of origin and transit with the primary aim of stopping “irregular” migrants before they reach European borders (and claim asylum) (Brambilla, 2014; Carrera et al., 2019; FitzGerald, 2020). While the former refers to the harmonization of regulations across national jurisdictions, the latter focuses on the unique policies adopted outside of Europe for the purpose of stemming emigration, the desired policy outcome.

Early studies of externalization, including those by Debenedetti (2009) or Rodier (2006), consider externalization policies to include border surveillance and interception at sea, detention camps in Europe, readmission agreements, carrier sanctions, liaison officer deployment, as well as asylum regulations such as “safe third countries.” In this vein, Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul (2016, p. 193) define externalization as “state actions to prevent migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the legal jurisdiction or territories of destination countries

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

or regions, or making them legally inadmissible without individually considering the merits of their protection claims.”<sup>12</sup> In contrast, other authors view externalization strictly as the subcontracting or outsourcing of border controls. For example, Carling and Carretero (2011) consider only pre-border surveillance as a form of externalization, while detection and apprehension at borders, post-arrival processing, and repatriation constitute traditional control-oriented approaches to managing unauthorized migration.<sup>13</sup>

Given extensive debate on the issue of *where* externalization policies start and stop, typologies of (externalization) policy instruments tend to avoid this issue and focus on the *nature* of externalization. For example, Triandafyllidou (2014) suggests distinguishing between three policy types (border control, return/readmission, and asylum) and two policy practices (fencing and gate-keeping).<sup>14</sup> In turn, Trauner and Wolff (2014) propose to distinguish between agreements and incentive-based instruments, operational and practical support, and international law and norms development. Similarly, Capesciotti (2017) builds a typology that distinguishes the contents from the methods of cooperation with third countries.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Menjivar (2014) addresses the twin processes of the externalization/outsourcing and internalization/insourcing of border controls, both of which rest on the securitization of migration management. The former involves extraterritorial activities in sending and transit countries at the request of migrant destination states, while internalization/insourcing involves internal

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<sup>12</sup> This Human Rights Watch report is critically engaging with the stated objectives of externalization policies, namely preventing irregular immigration to Europe, in a context characterized by few opportunities for “regular” immigration.

<sup>13</sup> They add that awareness campaigns against irregular migration and the creation of employment opportunities in countries of origin, or the prevention of illegal employment and the promotion of legal migration in countries of destination, represent alternative approaches to the same issue.

<sup>14</sup> Gatekeeping aims at restricting practical legal access to a nation and its institutions (e.g. visa policies), while fencing actively targets illegal migrants in order to arrest and then expel them (border surveillance, readmission agreements, etc.).

<sup>15</sup> These are further divided between “*one-dimensional*” agreements, such as readmission agreements, and *integrated* agreements, such as Mobility Partnerships of the Global Approach on Migration and Mobility, the European Neighbourhood Policy, or the EU-Turkey Statement.

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

enforcement controls (detection, detention, and deportation) along with immigration policies.

Based on the above, we decided to build our database of externalization policies by focusing on migration-related bilateral and multilateral agreements between (European) destination countries and third countries worldwide. Such agreements include migration policy packages (e.g. Mobility Partnerships, Migration Partnerships, Migration Compacts), labor migration programs (e.g. agreements on circular migration), readmission procedures (e.g. Readmission Agreements, Memoranda, Exchange of letters, Administrative Arrangements), border and police cooperation (e.g. joint border patrols, liaison officer deployment), *ad hoc* statements and declarations (e.g. the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016), and international fora (e.g. Khartoum and Rabat Processes). All these instruments constitute cooperation between destination and origin countries on the issue of migration management and therefore qualify as some form of the externalization of migration policies.

However, bilateral, and multilateral agreements are just the most visible part of the broader trend with regards to externalization. For example, when a third country signs a readmission agreement it often receives enhanced operational and financial support as well as facilitated travel opportunities for its citizens - or is at least promised such benefits by its European partner(s). Similarly, migration clauses in EU agreements, or commitments on the part of partner countries to comply with international norms and principles regarding asylum and migration, are often linked to trade concessions and/or development aid. Therefore, as we continue our research, we intend to include and analyze policy data on other forms of cooperation and assistance (aid and development, trade, border and police cooperation, institution building, etc.) and on the management of migration flows (visa and travel regulation, detention and expulsion, asylum procedures, legal status of foreigners, criminalization of irregular migration, etc.) both in destination countries and in origin and transit countries.

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Our data collection starts in 2002, the year of the Seville European Council which marks the beginning of the expansion of externalization as a strategy for migration management, as well as the point when certain development aid projects began to be explicitly tied to the stemming of emigration from developing countries (Conte & Cortinovia, 2018). For now, we have collected policy data through 2018. Thus far, we have identified a total of 514 external migration policies between third countries and either the EU or one of 31 European destination countries (EU-27, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom). The full list of relevant instruments is delineated in Table 1. Our data collection relied heavily upon the rich inventory of readmission agreements developed by Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2010, 2014, 2020), which we supplemented with additional instruments identified by Migreurop (2020) and the official websites of EU Member States and the EU.

In our dataset, policies are coded as 1 when an instrument is adopted between a European state and a partner state. Such binary coding overshadows the realities of implementation and variations of real-life interpretation of European policies in third countries. Such variations are studied extensively in other deliverables of the MAGYC project, notably in the Middle East and in the Horn of Africa. For the purpose of this research, we adopt a simple coding which reflects policies “on paper,” checking for implementing protocols when possible.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, we combine our newly collected data on policies with data on migration flows derived from Frontex and Eurostat, along with other sources, for the purpose of statistically evaluating whether the various measures have an impact on migrant inflows into Europe.

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<sup>16</sup> Such a strategy is consistent with other policy index methods. For further details see Beine et al., 2016; de Haas et al., 2018; Scipioni & Urso, 2017.

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Table 1: European Migration Cooperation Instruments

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Bilateral Instruments:</i>	
Administrative Arrangement	Defining modalities for cooperation between officials involved with migration management, including readmission of irregular migrants.
Circular Migration Agreement	Defining opportunities for professionals to temporarily take advantage of employment opportunities.
Convention	Defining the modalities for regular migration and process for addressing irregular migration, including deportations.
Framework Agreement	Defining modalities for cooperation between officials involved with migration management.
Exchange of Letters	Defining certain understandings regarding the identification and return of irregular migrants subject to deportation.
Memoranda of Understanding	Defining certain understandings regarding the identification and return of irregular migrants subject to deportation.
Migration Management Agreement	Defining multiple levels of cooperation, including assistance for border controls, development projects, readmission, etc. with the objective of reducing irregular emigration.
Police Cooperation Agreement	Defining the modalities for cooperation between public authorities involved with border control, individual identity verification, and other migration management operations.
Provisional Agreement	Defining preliminary agreements on cooperation with respect to migration management.
Readmission Agreement	Defining when and how the nationals of the states entering into the agreement with an irregular status are to be returned.
<i>EU and Bilateral Instruments</i>	
Implementation Protocol to EU Readmission Agreement	Defining how readmission agreements negotiated by the EU are to be applied by given member states and origin states.
<i>EU Instruments</i>	
Admission Procedures Agreement	Defining procedures for the deportation of irregular migrants.
Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility	Defining a framework for dialogue and cooperation regarding the facilitation of legal migration, combat of irregular migration, and expansion of the development impact of migration.
Readmission Agreement	Defining procedures for when and how the nationals of the states entering into the agreement, and possibly other third-country nationals who transited those states, with an irregular status are to be returned.
Good Practices Agreement	Defining best practices for migration management and deportations.
Joint Declaration	Informal commitment to actions on given migration issues.
Joint Statement	Informal commitment to actions on given migration issues.
Joint Way Forward	Informal commitment to actions on given migration issues.
Mobility Partnership	Defining a framework for dialogue and cooperation on irregular migration which will lead to visa liberalization.
Rabat and Khartoum Processes	Regional forums for dialogue on migration issues.

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Standard Operating Procedures

Defining best practices for migration management and deportations.

**Source:** Descriptions developed by authors, inspired in part by Cassarino (2020).

Table 2: Border States Represented by Frontex Migration Routes

Route	EU Member States	Border Type and States
Western African	Spain	Sea Borders of the Canary Islands
Western Mediterranean	Spain	Land Border with Morocco; Sea Borders excluding the Canary Islands
Central Mediterranean	Italy; Malta	Sea Borders
Eastern Mediterranean	Greece; Cyprus; Bulgaria	Sea Borders; Land Border with Turkey
Black Sea	Bulgaria; Romania	Sea Borders
Albania-Greece	Greece	Land Borders with Albania and North Macedonia
Western Balkans	Greece; Bulgaria; Romania; Hungary; Croatia	Land Borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina
Eastern Borders	Romania; Hungary; Slovakia; Poland; Lithuania; Latvia; Estonia; Finland; Norway	Land Borders with Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia
Northern Seas	France; Netherlands; Belgium; Denmark; Germany; Norway; Sweden; Finland	Sea Borders (Baltic Sea, North Sea)

**Source:** Frontex (2021).

### Migration and Asylum Data

This report focuses on irregular migration and builds upon a wealth of qualitative analysis of the contours of irregularity and the challenges what this notion entails in migration studies (Bommès & Sciortino, 2011; Boswell, 2014; Castles et al., 2012; Jordan & Düvell, 2002) and more limited quantitative studies on the volumes (Koser, 2010). For the purpose of this initial stage of our

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study, we focus on irregular entries into Europe from 2009 to 2018, using data collected by the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) regarding the number of "irregular border crossers" (IBCs) identified on the external borders of the EU and Schengen Area (FRONTEX, 2020). IBCs constitute individuals who have been identified as crossing a border irregularly, and who have subsequently been released or detained. Importantly, the data refer to border crossings and not to individuals, meaning that an individual who attempts to cross into Europe irregularly multiple times will appear in the data each time. Moreover, the data itself is compiled by Frontex based on counts provided by state governments which partner with the Agency. Although governments have been asked to provide counts using a similar methodology, Frontex cannot confirm whether this request is systematically respected. Despite these concerns, however, the data constitute a useful proxy measure regarding attempts at irregular entry broken down by the nationalities of origin of individuals seeking to enter Europe. In addition, the data is divided into nine primary routes of entry, as delineated and described in **Table 2**, with each representing part of the external sea and land borders of the EU/Schengen Area. This geographical variation provides additional possibilities for understanding how the public policies of the EU and European states impact migrant flows.

At this stage we have decided not to rely on other migration variables as we have not identified data that would be suitable for an analysis of the impact of externalization policies on irregular flows. We decided not to use data collected by Eurostat on TCNs blocked at EU borders. Although this data is of general interest and usefully provides the citizenship of blocked TCNs along with the type of border where they were blocked (land, sea, air) and the country which blocked entry, we concluded that it was inoperable for our research given that it is heavily biased towards certain nationalities and policy developments. In the aggregate, Moroccans blocked at the land border with Spain represent 50-75% of all identified blocked TCNS across the time-period covered by the data. Moreover, the trend in the number of total individuals

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blocked at all borders constitutes an inverted bell curve, countercyclical to the number of IBCs. This results firstly from a sharp decrease of the number of Moroccan citizens blocked at the Spanish land border from 2009 to 2014, followed by a slight increase until 2018. Secondly, there is a substantial increase in the number of (mostly) Sub-Saharan and North African citizens blocked at the French land borders in 2017 and 2018, along with growth in the number of TCNs of various origins blocked at the Polish, Greek and Hungarian borders. Although obviously connected to the implementation of stricter migration control at the EU internal and external borders, such evolutions appear to be specifically tied to political decisions, such as the reintroduction of border control at the Franco-Italian border, and therefore cannot be considered a source of data on irregular migration flows, at least at this stage of our research.

However, as we continue with our research, we intend to use additional migration and asylum statistics to confirm our initial results and to further explore the impact of externalization policies on migration and refugee flows, both in Europe as well as in countries of origin and transit. For example, Eurostat collects data on the number of foreign nationals identified by EU member states as residing irregularly on their territories. Although it is unfortunately impossible to know whether these individuals entered Europe irregularly or overstayed their visas, this offers a rough estimate of the number of irregular migrants located within Europe. It is possible that policies may influence the number of individuals identified. We likewise intend to use data on deportations and asylum acceptance rates across Europe. Given our current focus on migration routes and irregular border crossings, these data were not useful for the analyses presented in this report.

### **4. Understanding Irregular Border Crossings**

Prior to exploring the impact of externalization policies on “irregular migration” flows, we first present analyses of key migration trends affecting Europe. Specifically, in this section, we examine the composition and evolution of irregular flows to Europe, defined as IBCs, from 2009 to 2020, the years for

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which Frontex provides complete relevant data. The first subsection addresses the issue of mixed migration flows by focusing on the potential of irregular border crossers to be granted international protection in Europe. The second subsection discusses the geographical dispersion of migrants across migration routes, including the assumption that migrants will change their trajectories to Europe if and when they face stricter border controls at particular locations.

Ultimately, we estimate that 54% of all IBCs identified by Frontex between 2009-2020 could be considered individuals who would have likely obtained refugee status if they had applied for asylum in a European destination state. Moreover, in 2015 that estimate rises to roughly 76%, while on certain routes a majority of IBCs can be considered “likely refugees” in most years. At the same time, as opportunities for migration are closed, only a few nationalities demonstrate substantial presence across multiple routes, leading us to hypothesize that rerouting is a rare phenomenon, and one predominantly tied to nationalities rarely granted refugee status. These findings raise the concern that externalization policies may be stymying the ability of individuals to find protection from persecution in Europe.

We begin our analyses of migration flows by reviewing general trends in the number of IBCs over time. Figures 1-5 illustrate key elements of the IBCs data that we use as our indicator of migration to Europe. First, Figure 1 delineates the 25 nationalities for which over 10 thousand IBCs were identified in total between 2009 and 2020. As shown, Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis represent dramatically more IBCs than all other nationalities. Indeed, this is confirmed by Figure 2, which shows that these three nationalities represent just over 50% of all IBCs identified across the 12 year in question. Given the ongoing conflicts that have affected Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, most IBCs are thus either directly or indirectly fleeing violence and its ramifications. Figure 1 likewise demonstrates that most other IBCs have originated from African, Middle Eastern, or South Asian states, with the notable exception of Kosovars and Albanians.

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In turn, Figures 3-5 indicate the relative importance of various migration routes. While Frontex provides data broken down by nine routes (see Table 2), for the purpose of our descriptive analysis, we aggregate data on IBCs into four groups of routes which we call “channels” to avoid confusion: (1) the Western African and Western Mediterranean routes, which represent detections made by Spain, (2) the Central Mediterranean route, which is unchanged from Frontex data, (3) the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, which represent a largely singular pathway to Europe given that many migrants who cross the Eastern Mediterranean route continue through the Western Balkans in order to reach Northern and Western Europe,<sup>17</sup> and (4) all other routes, which represent relatively less significant pathways for entry. The Western Africa and Western Mediterranean routes, on the one hand, and the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan routes, on the other hand, are particularly closely linked and similar trends can be observed within both pairs. Our aggregation thus allows for greater clarity in a review of irregular migration to Europe. For simplicity, we call the four migration channels Western, Central, Eastern, and Other, respectively.

Figure 3 reveals the total number of annual IBCs from 2009 to 2020, with the stacked bars representing the four primary channels to Europe. Most notably, this Figure reveals the dramatic spike in the number of IBCs detected in 2015, representing the migrant/refugee crisis of that year. In turn, Figure 4 delineates the percentage of IBCs identified across the four channels over time and reveals that the Eastern and Central channels have persistently been the dominant points of entry for IBCs. Although there was greater diversity in the number of routes adopted by IBCs in 2009 and 2010, and a relative rise in the significance of the Western channel from 2018 onwards, these years had substantially lower levels of absolute IBC detections. In other words, spikes in migration to Europe are tied to a relative reduction in the diversity of routes

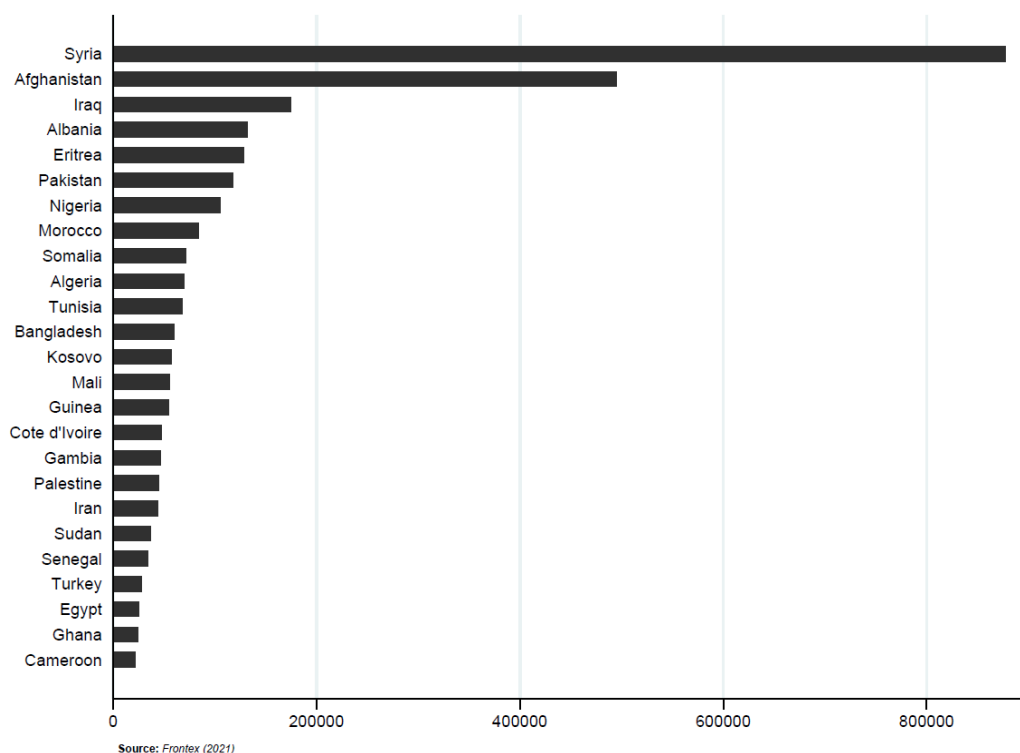
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<sup>17</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the dynamics on the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes involve a higher risk of the double counting individuals as IBCs.

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

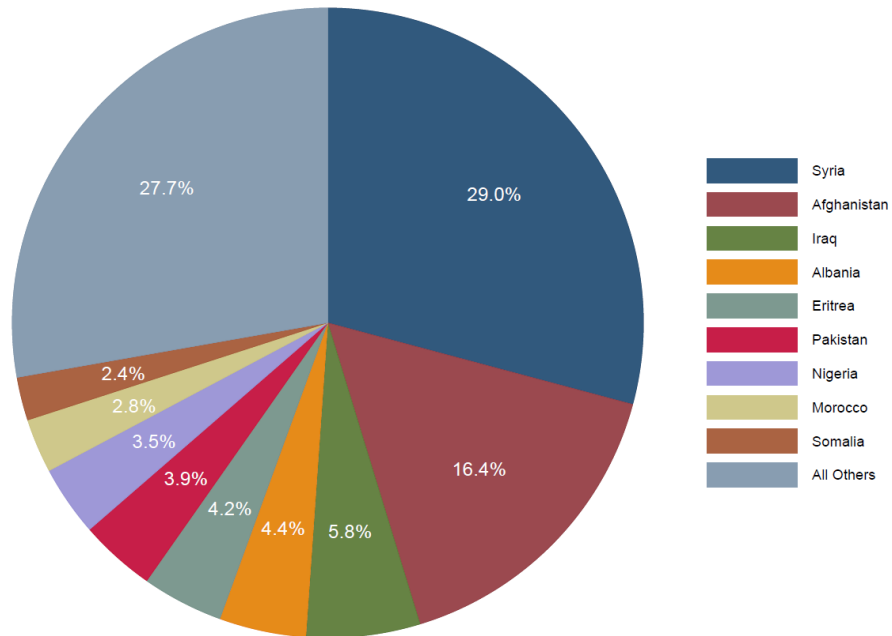
used by migrants. Aggregating across the entire period, Figure 5 reveals that the Eastern channel accounts for roughly 63.1% of all IBCs, with the Central channel accounting for roughly 26.4% of all IBCs, and the Western and Other channels the remaining 9.8%. Given that the 2015 crisis was centered on the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, this disproportionate significance is unsurprising.

Figure 1: Primary Nationalities of IBCs 2009-2020



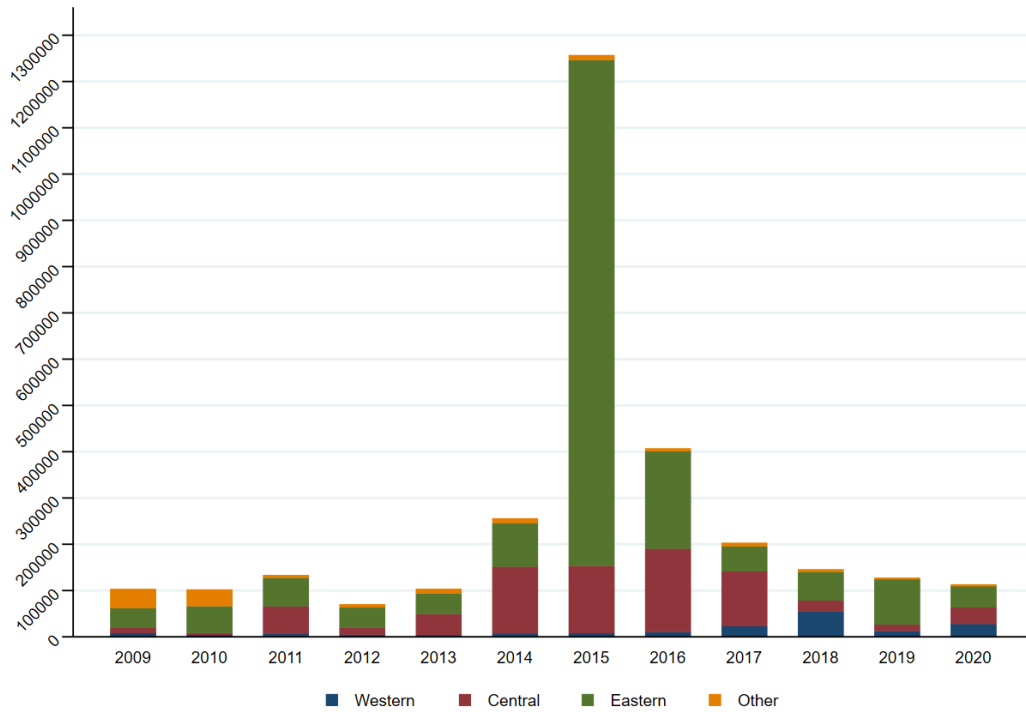
## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 2: Share of IBCs by Nationality 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021)

Figure 3: Annual IBCs by Migratory Channels 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021)

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 4: Annual Share of IBCs by Migratory Channel 2009-2020

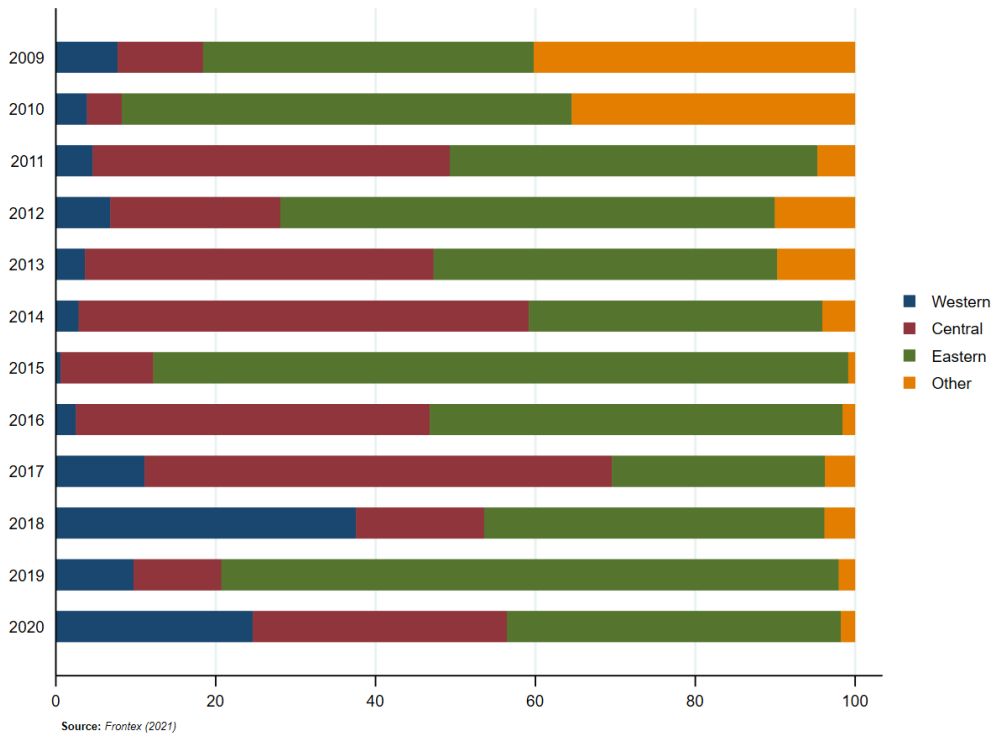
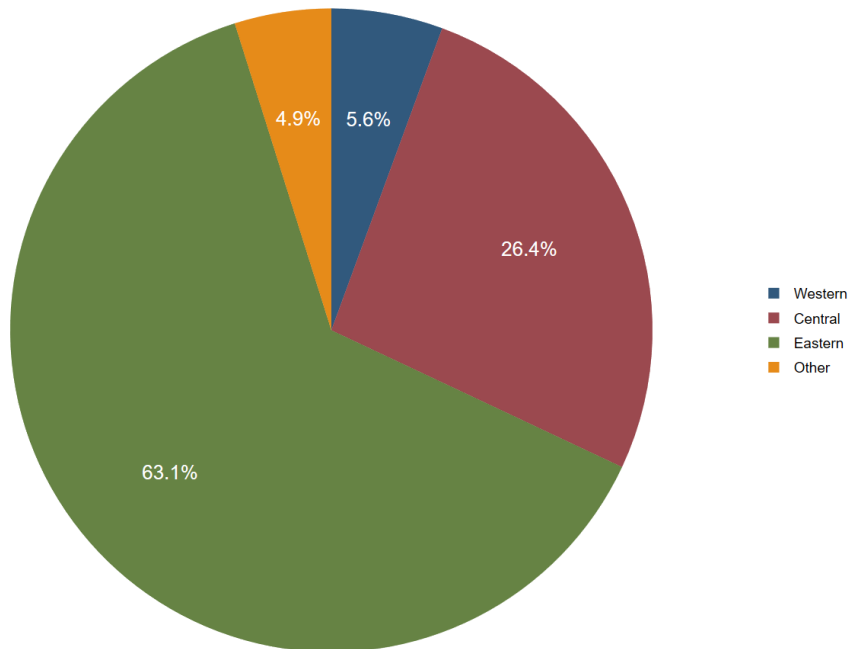


Figure 5: Share of IBCs by Migratory Channel 2009-2020



### Measuring Mixed Migration Flows: “Likely Refugees” and “Likely Irregular Migrants”

Scholars have raised critiques regarding the distinction between refugees and irregular migrants as well as the use of data compiled by governments. Specifically, they have questioned the legal dichotomy between forced and voluntary migration (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), while nevertheless acknowledging its “stickiness” (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018). In this vein, they have demonstrated that the motivations of migrants are generally composed of a “continuum of experiences” between pure fear of persecution and search for economic opportunities; motivations which may vary across life cycles (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018). In addition, scholarship has shown how data and discourses can portray migration as a threat to the societies of the Global North, thereby engendering its “securitization.” In sum, they argue that bordering practices play a central role in the politicised fight against irregular migration (Andersson, 2014), and that data on supposedly “irregular” or “illegal” migration play a role in advancing these political and policy trends (Bigo, 2001). Past research has thus demonstrated not only that categories of “refugees” and “migrants” are politically (and socially) constructed (Apostolova, 2015; Bakewell, 2008; Robertson, 2018) but also that asylum acceptance/rejection rates are part of EU migration and asylum policies which directly affect individual decisions on whether to engage in migration (Bertoli et al., 2013). The description and measuring of mixed migration flows is thus not only a policy challenge (Koser & Van Hear, 2003; Van Hear, 2011) but also a scientific debate shaped by constructivist studies on the politics of labelling and triage (Allen et al., 2018; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Thiollet, 2019; Zetter, 1991).

Building upon this literature, we acknowledge that the categories of forced and irregular migration are highly dependent upon state policies which label people on the move, and we argue that this reality should be better integrated into quantitative assessments of migration flows. Importantly, while the UNHCR grants refugee status to asylum seekers across the Global South, in

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the Global North distinguishing between forced and irregular migrants largely depends on the asylum policies implemented by destination countries. Thus, policies label people who cross borders irregularly (Zetter, 1991), producing politically and statistically constructed boundaries that are foundational for the triage operated at state borders (Council of the European Union, 2002). Triage operationalises legal distinctions, turning labels into actions, namely detention and deportation for those deemed “irregular” and protection for refugees. We therefore use this constructivist perspective on legal and statistical categories to develop a better understanding of migration flows during crises marked by peaks in irregular border crossing, focusing specifically on Europe and the 2015 crisis.

While not adopting a normative standpoint, we show that externalization policies affect individuals to whom European countries would have granted asylum and, by doing so, we highlight the potential inconsistencies within EU migration policy logics. Moreover, it is highly plausible that most IBCs do indeed apply for asylum in Europe, even if they are aware their applications are likely to be rejected. Our analysis therefore offers a useful means to evaluate the composition of mixed-migration flows and subsequently the potential effects of policies on these two categories of migrants.

Having established the general trends in migration to Europe above, we conduct an innovative analysis evaluating whether IBCs can be considered to represent “likely irregular migrants” (thus potentially subject to deportation procedures) or “likely refugees” (who would obtain refugee status if they applied for asylum). To make this distinction, we calculate the weighted average acceptance/rejection rate<sup>18</sup> of asylum applications across Europe for all nationalities identified as IBCs. Specifically, we rely on Eurostat (2021) data regarding the number of asylum applications by nationality across 31 European destination states (EU-27 plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and the

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<sup>18</sup> For clarity, we will only say acceptance rate moving forward, given that the rejection rate is simply the inverse percentage.

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United Kingdom). We first calculate the percentage of all asylum decisions pertaining to a particular nationality adjudicated in each destination state. We then multiply the percentage of decisions with the percentage of first instance asylum acceptances per nationality for each destination state and sum the results together to obtain the weighted rejection rate for each nationality across Europe.<sup>19</sup> Finally, we use this weighted percentage to split the number of IBCs of each nationality into the number of “likely irregular migrants” and the number of “likely refugees.” Given the divisions by nationality we can aggregate up to obtain the overall number of IBCs who are “likely irregular migrants” or “likely refugees” on each migratory route defined by Frontex or in total across all routes.

Our approach raises several concerns that we fully acknowledge. It assumes that IBCs are all potential asylum seekers even though many may have no intention of applying for asylum in Europe. In addition, our estimation of the weighted average acceptance rate is entirely based on the nationality of each IBC, setting aside the individual dimension of asylum procedures which primarily assess the risk of personal persecutions. Nevertheless, our method adopts a pragmatic standpoint which is not without legal grounds. Refugeeism is defined by the Convention relating to the status of Refugees of 1951 (Article 1A(2)) and its Protocol of 1967. While the legal definition of refugees emphasizes individual persecution in countries of origin or habitual residence, it is also applied to persons fleeing systematized violence against civilian populations. Considering the likelihood of obtaining asylum based on one’s nationality thus echoes the legal principle of *prima facie* or group determination of refugee status,<sup>20</sup> and fits in the 1999 Common European

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<sup>19</sup> We use data on first instance decisions as opposed to final instance decisions because the latter only pertain to a subset of applications that were subject to an appeals procedure. Given that appeals procedures vary across European states, cross-national comparisons of appeals data are more problematic in contrast to comparisons of first instance decisions. Moreover, the final instance decisions do not provide an overall rate of rejection/acceptance of asylum applications for certain nationalities as do first instance decisions.

<sup>20</sup> The UNHCR defines *prima facie* protection as “a practice by which all persons forming part of a large-scale influx are regarded as refugees on a *prima facie* basis. Group determination

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asylum system principle that led to the creation of “subsidiary protection” in 2004<sup>21</sup> notwithstanding individual variations within nationalities based on personal circumstances. In addition, irregular migrants who are unlikely to obtain asylum can - and often do - apply for protection. Altogether, despite the limitations of our technique, we argue that it provides a generally accurate depiction of the nature of mixed migration flows represented by data on IBCs; our analyses are certainly an improvement to uncritical uses of this data and, at the very least, generate a rough depiction of the categories represented by flows.

Having calculated the average weighted asylum rejection rate, we present the results of our estimations across Figures 6-14 and in Table 3. In Figures 6-10 we illustrate the total annual number of IBCs from 2009-2020, with the stacked bars representing the number of estimated “likely refugees” and “likely irregular migrants.” Figure 6 represents all IBCs identified by Frontex across all migration routes, with the percentage of likely refugees indicated above the bars. In turn, Figures 7-10 focus on each of the four primary migratory channels described above. In Table 3, we delineate the percentage of IBCs we estimate are “likely refugees” across each channel over time. Finally, Figures 11-14 represent the primary nationalities of IBCs identified across the four main channels, thereby providing an illustration of the diversity of nationalities which have used each channel to reach Europe.

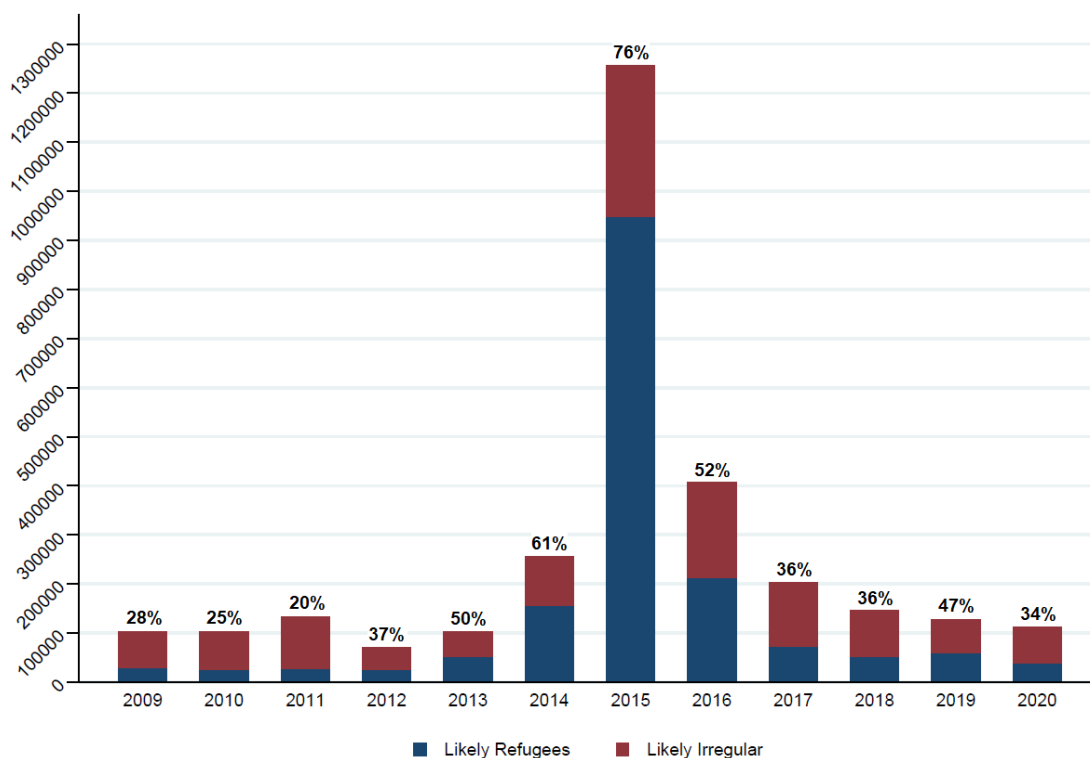
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ensures that protection and assistance needs are met without prior individual status determination”(UNHCR, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> This refers to “the protection given to a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in Art. 15 of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive), and to whom Art. 17(1) and (2) of this Directive do not apply, and are unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.” Directive of 2011 recasting Council Directive 2004/83/EC (European Union, 2004, 2011).

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Figure 6: Aggregate IBCs as Likely Refugees (in %) or Likely Irregular Migrants 2009-2020



Note: Frontex (2021) data on IBCs split by weighted average asylum acceptance rates calculated from Eurostat (2021) data.

Figure 6 clearly reveals the exceptional number of IBCs that occurred in 2015, characterized by the entry of large numbers of Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis. In this vein, it reveals that the 2015 migration crisis was first and foremost a refugee crisis. Overall, we estimate that roughly 54% of all IBCs identified between 2009 and 2020 by Frontex can be classified as likely refugees. As shown schematically by Figure 6, during the 2015 peak in crossings, our estimate rises to nearly 76% of all IBCs. This is unsurprising given the nationalities represented are those most likely to be granted asylum in Europe. However, even before and after the 2015 crisis, from roughly one-fifth to over one-third of all IBCs are estimated to be “likely refugees,” indicating a consistent inflow of individuals with a high chance of obtaining protection. At the same time, Figure 6 reveals that many IBCs during this period originated from countries facing economic and social crises rather than generalized violence and oppression. Thus, our breakdown shows that irregular border crossings

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constitute mixed migration flows while simultaneously highlighting a genuine concern that externalization policies may force potential refugees to remain in precarious situations or to face persecution if unable to reach European destination countries.

In turn, we illustrate the number of IBCs across the four migration channels and by the top five nationalities present on each channel between 2009-2020. Specifically, Figure 7 presents the aggregated data for the Western channel, revealing a rise in the number of IBCs in 2018 and 2020. Although we estimate relatively fewer “likely refugees” on this channel in the early 2010s, the percentage of those who can be classified as such rose to a high of roughly 30% in 2014, as shown in Table 3. In turn, as shown by Figure 11, IBCs here have persistently represented a highly heterogeneous set of nationalities, given that the “All Others” category is often the greatest alongside the five top nationalities, all of which are unsurprisingly West African. This spike in the number of IBCs in 2018 may be tied to the closure of alternative routes for entry into Europe coupled with the emergence of new opportunities to enter Spain via the Canary Islands or the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

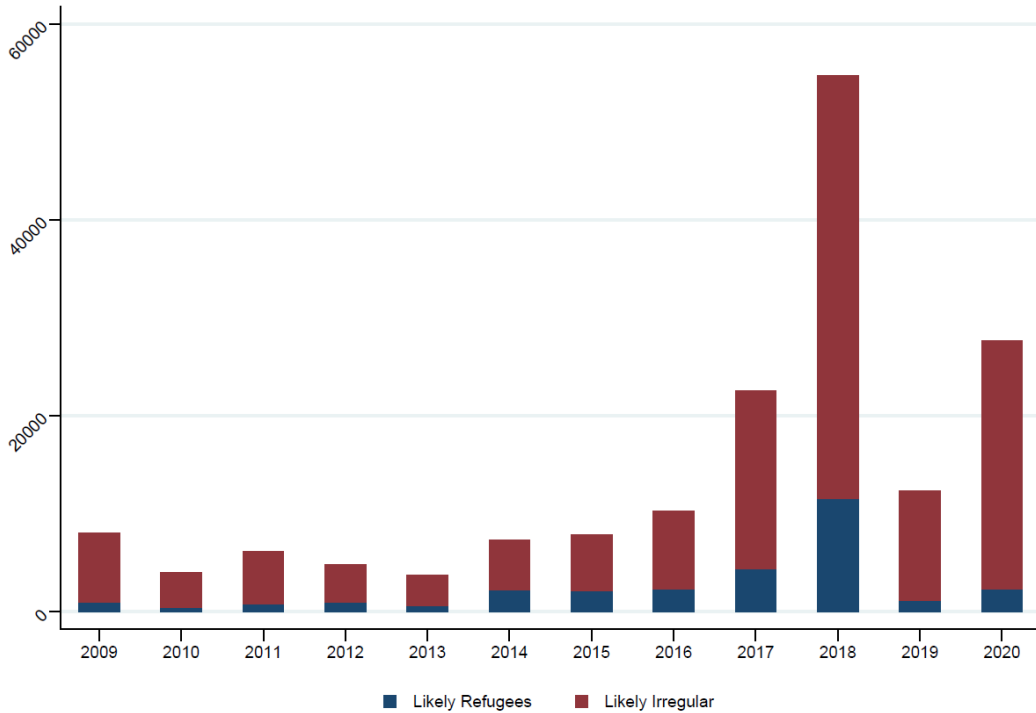
Table 3: Percentage of IBCs as “Likely Refugees”  
by Migration Channels 2009-2020

<b>Year</b>	<b>Western</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Eastern</b>	<b>Other</b>
2009	12.2	33.9	45.6	12.2
2010	9.8	29.5	34.4	11.9
2011	13.3	14.5	26.9	12.5
2012	19.6	42.4	40.2	14.0
2013	17.3	61.3	49.5	11.0
2014	30.3	64.9	62.1	13.4
2015	27.4	51.6	79.7	9.7
2016	22.8	36.0	69.2	8.2
2017	19.4	31.5	54.8	11.2
2018	21.1	33.3	52.9	12.0
2019	9.0	24.8	56.3	12.9
2020	8.3	18.0	62.2	12.7

**Source:** Frontex (2021) data on IBCs split using Eurostat (2021) data on asylum acceptance rates.

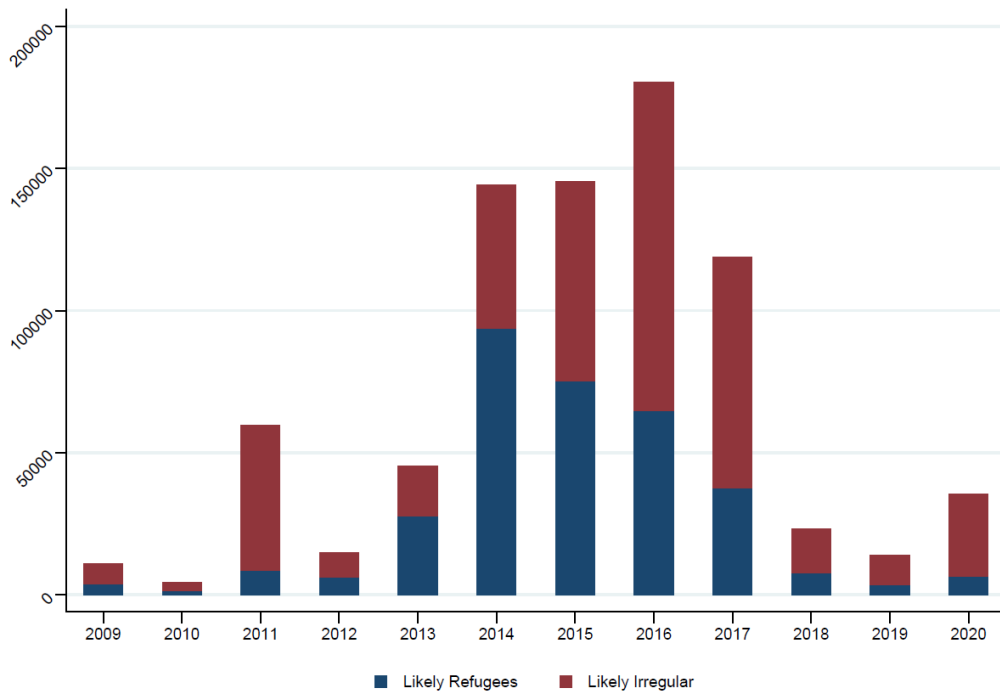
## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 7: IBCs as “Likely Refugees” or “Likely Irregular Migrants” on the Western Channel 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021) data on IBCs split by weighted average asylum acceptance rates calculated from Eurostat (2021) data.

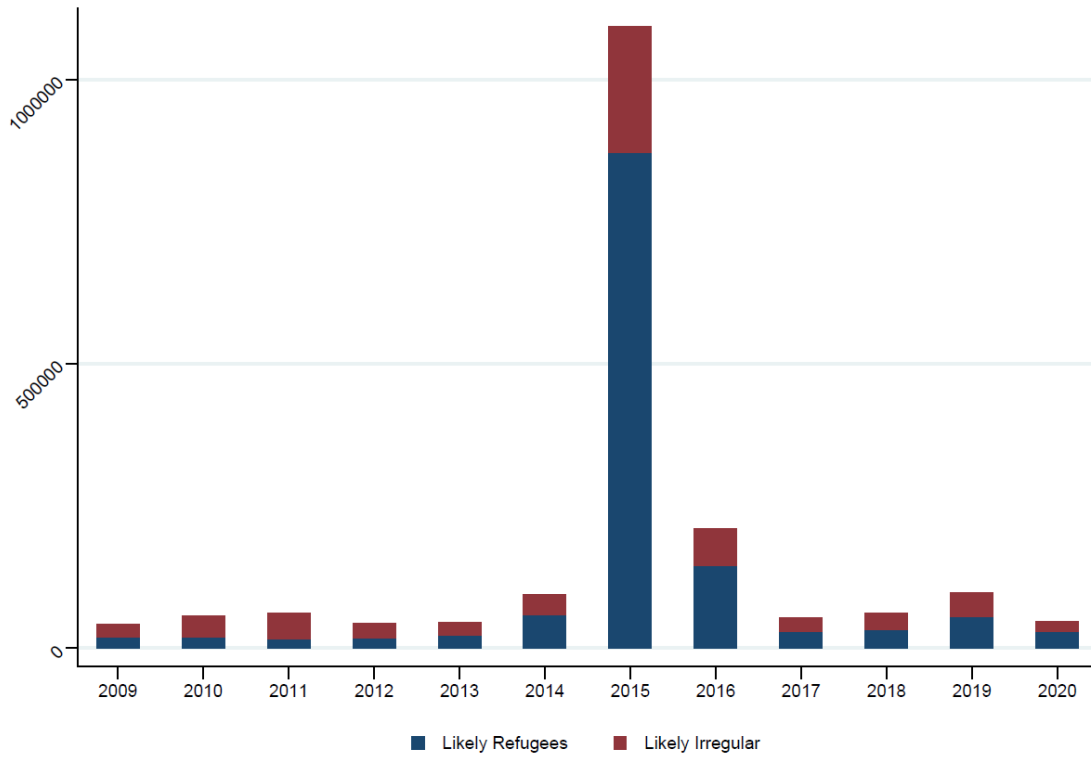
Figure 8: IBCs as “Likely Refugees” or “Likely Irregular Migrants” on the Central Channel 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021) data on IBCs split by weighted average asylum acceptance rates calculated from Eurostat (2021) data.

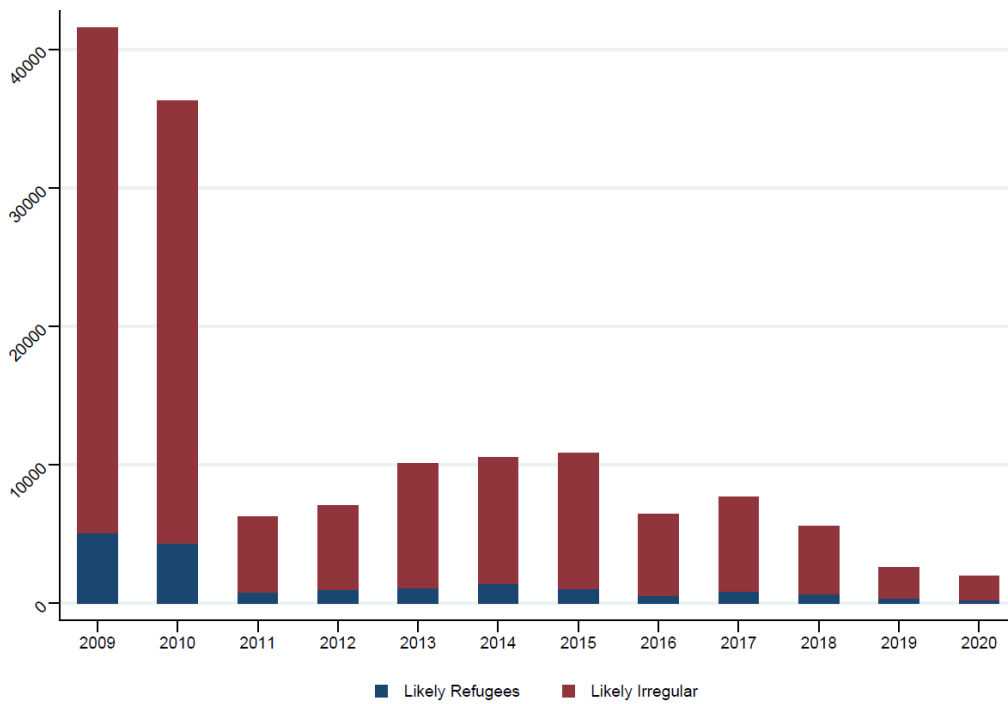
## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 9: IBCs as “Likely Refugees” or “Likely Irregular Migrants” on the Eastern Channel 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021) data on IBCs split by weighted average asylum acceptance rates calculated from Eurostat (2021) data.

Figure 10: IBCs as “Likely Refugees” or “Likely Irregular Migrants” on the Other Channel 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021) data on IBCs split by weighted average asylum acceptance rates calculated from Eurostat (2021) data.

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 11: Main Nationalities on the Western Channel 2009-2020

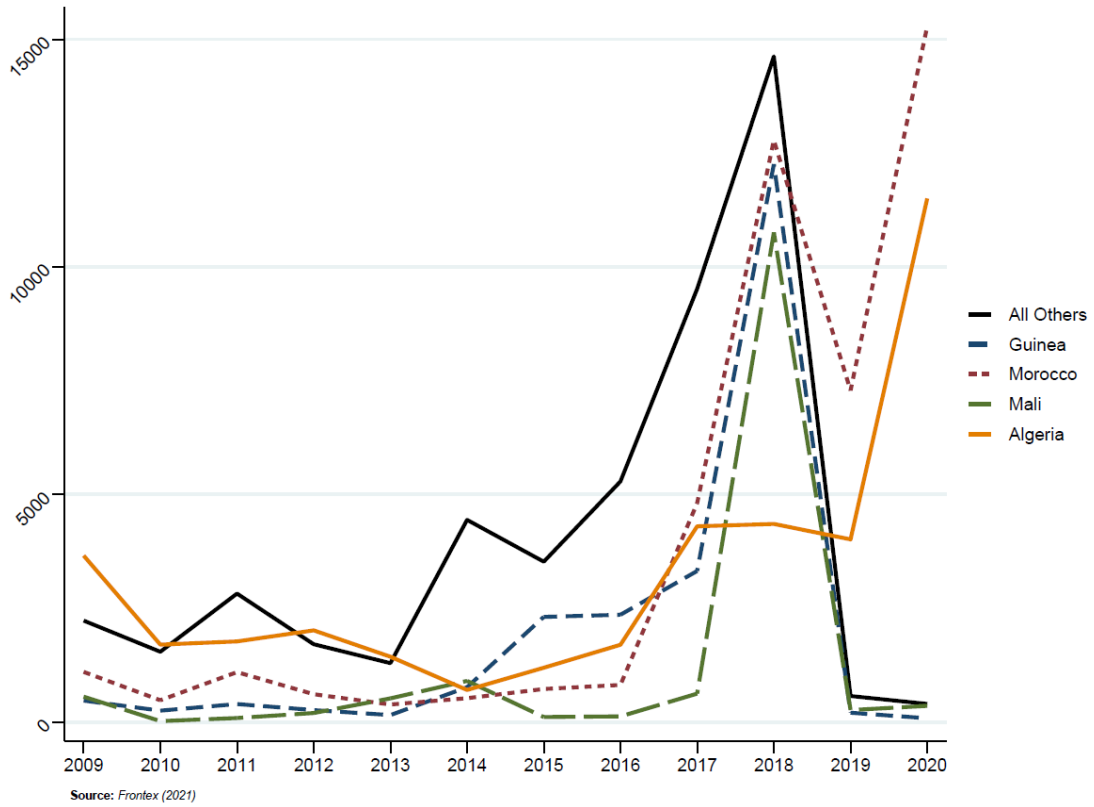
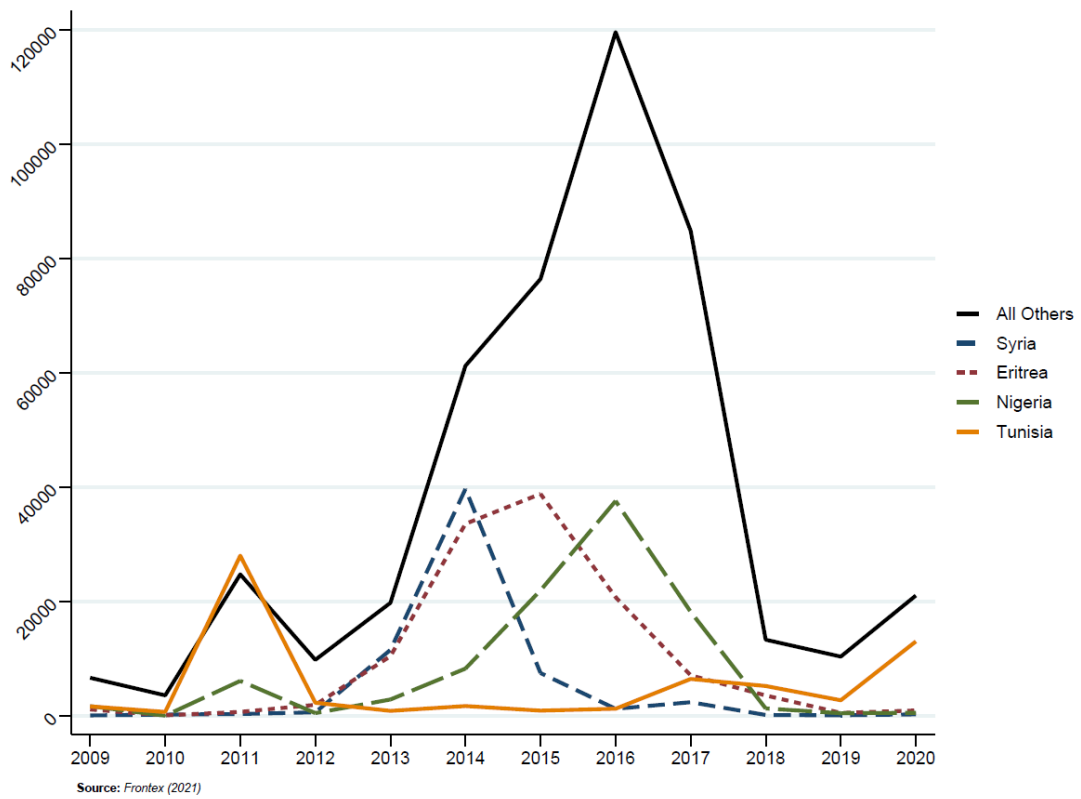


Figure 12: Main Nationalities on the Central Channel 2009-2020



## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 13: Main Nationalities on the Eastern Channel 2009-2020

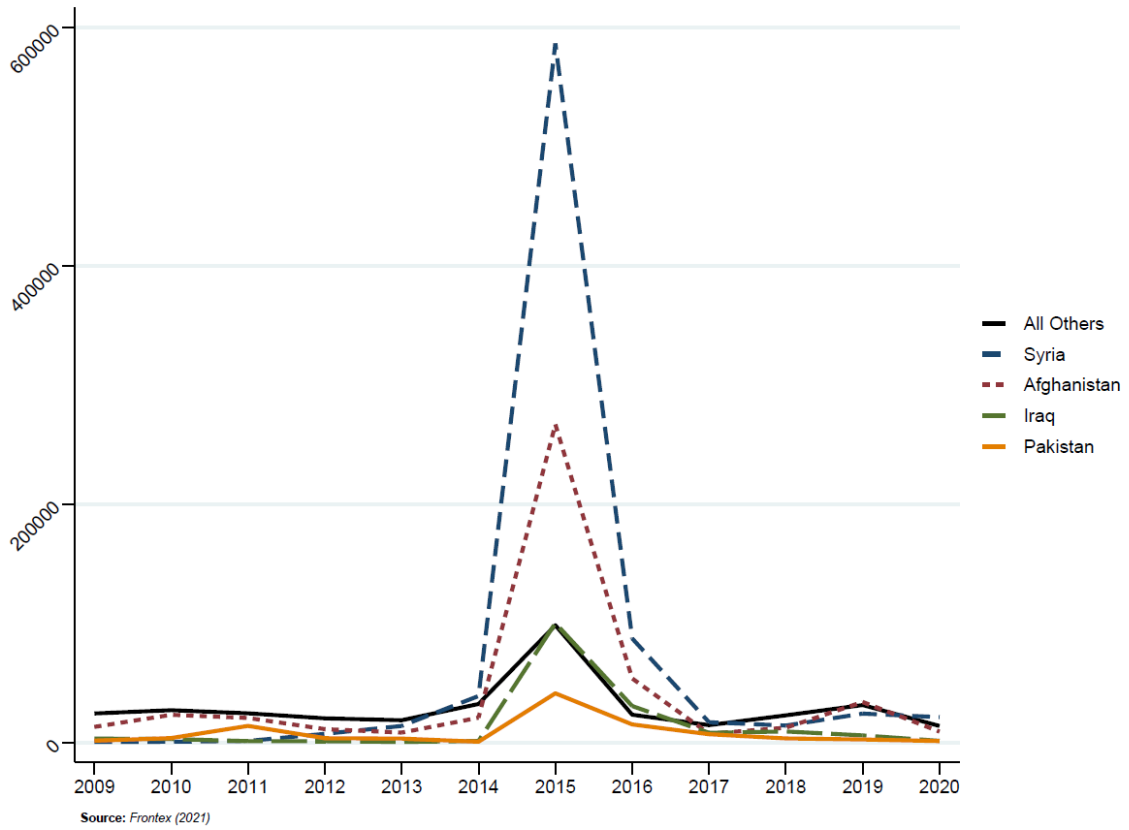
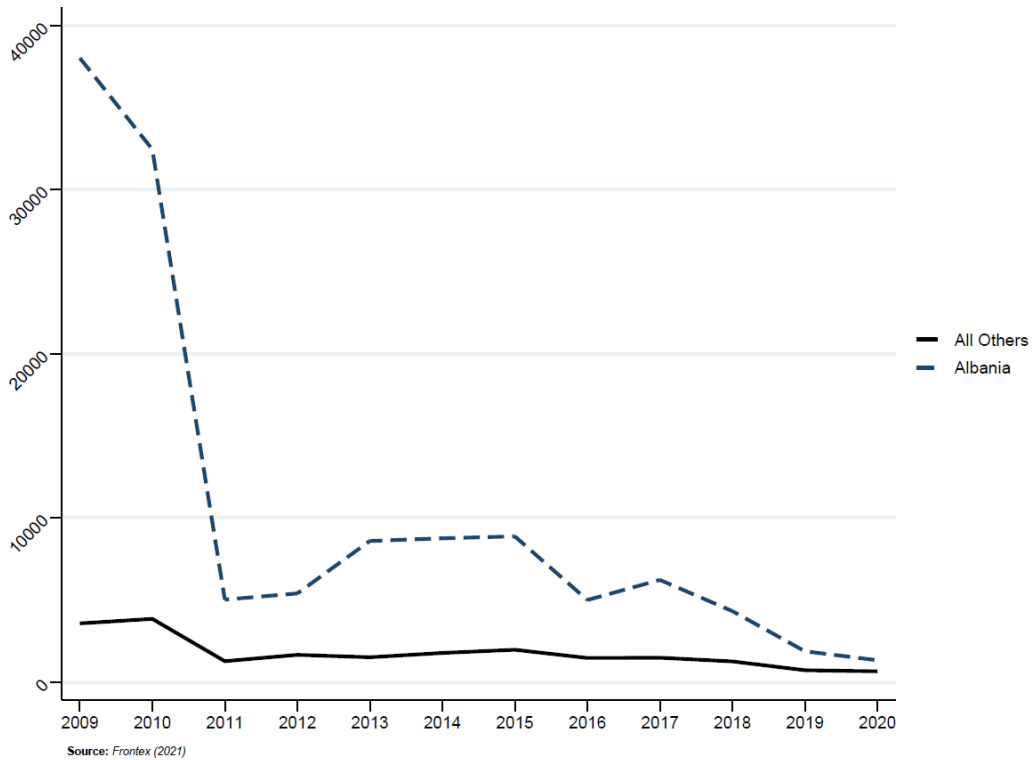


Figure 14: Main Nationalities on the Other Channel 2009-2020



## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 9 represents the Central channel, which has recorded a substantially larger number of IBCs in contrast to the Western channel, rising up to roughly 175,000 in 2016. While this channel was significantly affected by the 2015 crisis, it also experienced more sustained, substantial crossings from 2013-2017. As shown in Table 3, the majority of IBCs are estimated to be likely refugees during this period. Figure 12 reveals that this channel is host to a highly heterogeneous population of IBCs, including individuals from Western Africa, Eastern Africa, and the Middle East. This is unsurprising due to the channel's geographic position. Varying policy measures adopted by Italy along with fluctuations in the intensity of conflict in Libya likely influenced the viability of this migration channel over time.

Figure 11 represents the Eastern channel, the one most acutely affected by the 2015 crisis, with a spike of over 1 million IBCs in 2015 followed by a collapse to slightly above pre-2015 levels in 2016 and beyond. As shown in Table 3, in 2014 roughly 62% of IBCs could be considered as "likely refugees." In 2015, however, we estimate that nearly 79% of IBCs would likely obtain refugee status if they applied for asylum in Europe. As shown in Figure 13, Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis have consistently been the primary nationalities identified as IBCs on this channel, alongside smaller numbers of Pakistanis, Iranians, and other nationalities. Populations here are significantly less heterogeneous than on the other channels, which is potentially tied to the higher percentage of likely refugees. However, a closer look also reveals that individuals from the Balkan region itself have joined migrants from further away. Of the five main nationalities identified, thousands of Kosovars joined Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, and Pakistanis in their quest to reach Europe in 2014 and 2015.

Lastly, Figures 13 and 14 reveal the migratory dynamics on the Other channel. These Figures demonstrate that the overall number of migrants identified across the relevant routes is substantially smaller than on the three alternative primary migratory channels, representing on average fewer than 10 thousand people annually from 2010 onwards. As shown in Figure 13, the years 2009 and 2010, when 41589 and 36297 IBCs were identified on this

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channel, respectively, were exceptional. Nevertheless, even these numbers represent dramatically fewer IBCs than those identified on the other channels. Moreover, as shown in Figure 14, Albanians in 2009 and 2010 represented the primary border crossers, with the primary entry point to Europe being Greece. The number of IBCs dropped dramatically in 2011 when the EU implemented visa liberalization policy for Albanian nationals entering the Schengen Area.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, our estimates demonstrate that likely refugees represent a large minority among IBCs on all migratory channels during the ten-year period studied here, and the vast majority on the main channels affected by the 2015 crisis. It follows that the closure of opportunities for migration following agreements between Europe and certain migrant transit countries, such as Turkey and Libya, have a direct impact on the ability of likely refugees to seek protection under international law in Europe. There is therefore a serious concern that the externalization of migration management constitutes an affront to European commitments to assist those fleeing from persecution and violence.

### Shifting Migration Routes? Exploring the Spatial Distribution of Migrants and Refugees

Having established the nature of irregular migration flows to Europe, we turn to describing the geographical distribution of migrants across routes. We engage with the literature on mobility trajectories that studies how migratory practices interact with regulatory settings during different phases of migration processes. Such approaches go against more linear views of migration which reduce mobility to a single relocation based on decision-making in the country of origin and leading automatically to settlement in a country of destination. As mentioned earlier, European policies during the 2015 crisis mostly deployed strategies of containment, restriction and deterrence but with little foresight on

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<sup>22</sup> Although this channel encompasses land borders with Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, it does not include inflows of Ukrainians in the context of the 2013 crisis. Most migrants exiting Ukraine travel to Poland with work permits and have done so regularly following the granting of visa-free travel to the Schengen Area in 2017 (Jaroszewicz, 2018).

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“whether such an approach works” and whether it is “possible for governments, through a process of discouraging human movement, to actually change someone's mind about migrating?” (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016). It is therefore worth examining whether attempts to stem inflows have different consequences on various categories of people on the move. Such assessment would help evaluate the efficacy of specific policy measures upon distinct groups of migrants, revealing both intentioned and unintended consequences of policies.

To start and address the issue, the following provides an overview of trends and shifts among major Mediterranean migration routes for selected nationalities of IBCs' during the period 2009-2020. Although we do not explore at this stage why and how migrants potentially shift routes, which likely depends on constraints and opportunities in transit countries and on the strengthening or (more rarely) easing of border controls in destination countries, the results suggest that a few nationalities demonstrate substantial presence across multiple routes. This may indicate that “rerouting” is a rare phenomenon, and one predominantly tied to nationalities rarely granted refugee status. These findings raise the concern that border policies may be stymying the ability of individuals to find protection from persecution in Europe.<sup>23</sup>

As a first step, we calculate the concentration/dispersion<sup>24</sup> of the 25 top nationalities identified as IBCs across our nine Frontex migratory routes during the period 2009-2020. These nationalities represent over 96% of all IBCs across the period. To calculate concentration we consider “routes” as opposed to “channels” to obtain a more accurate estimation. Specifically, Table 4 shows the share of IBCs concentrated on the primary route to Europe for each

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<sup>23</sup> While our findings contrast with analyses conducted by Fasani and Frattini (2020) on the impact of the 2016 EU Turkey Statement, they are aligned with other scholarship on the same declaration (Spijkerboer, 2016). While the former seems to see the sharp decline in IBC numbers as an impact of the statement, the latter argue that “there is no identifiable relation between the EU-Turkey Agreement and the number of migrants crossing the Aegean from Turkey to Greece.”

<sup>24</sup> For simplicity, we state concentration from this point forward.

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nationality (typically the most direct route from an origin country to the nearest European border). A low percentage indicates substantial dispersion of nationals across two or more channels, while a high percentage indicates a significant concentration of IBCs of a particular nationality on a single primary channel. For example, only 39% of Moroccan IBCs are found on the Western Mediterranean route, indicating that many Moroccans identified as IBCs took alternative pathways to reach Europe. In contrast, 97% of Afghans were identified on the Eastern Mediterranean route. Overall, Table 4 reveals that only a few nationalities are found in substantial numbers across multiple routes. Thus, most nationals of any given country of origin utilize a single primary migratory channel and are rarely dispersed across alternative migration pathways.

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Table 4: Dispersion of IBCs across Routes  
by 25 Main Nationalities 2009-2020 Aggregated

Origin Country Nationality	Main Migratory Channel	Percentage of Total on Main Route
Kosovo	Western Balkans	99.5
Albania	Albania-Greece	95.5
Tunisia	Central Mediterranean	94.9
Nigeria	Central Mediterranean	94.1
Eritrea	Central Mediterranean	92.9
Sudan	Central Mediterranean	92.1
Iraq	Eastern Mediterranean	86.6
Senegal	Central Mediterranean	86.1
Ghana	Central Mediterranean	83.6
Gambia	Central Mediterranean	82.1
Egypt	Central Mediterranean	82.1
Turkey	Eastern Mediterranean	82.0
Iran	Eastern Mediterranean	81.6
Syria	Eastern Mediterranean	78.6
Afghanistan	Eastern Mediterranean	78.2
Cote d'Ivoire	Central Mediterranean	69.8
Mali	Central Mediterranean	69.6
Palestine	Eastern Mediterranean	68.3
Somalia	Central Mediterranean	60.1
Bangladesh	Central Mediterranean	57.9
Guinea	Central Mediterranean	55.6
Algeria	Western Mediterranean	54.9
Pakistan	Eastern Mediterranean	54.0
Morocco	Western Mediterranean	37.1
Cameroon	Central Mediterranean	34.8

**Source:** Author calculations using Frontex (2021) and Eurostat (2021) data.

As a second step, we selected three nationalities - Moroccans, Cameroonians, and Syrians - for which we explore presence across the four migratory channels over time, in order to illustrate the potential rerouting of

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migrants.<sup>25</sup> Our goal is to illustrate when and to what extent some nationalities tend to use multiple routes to reach Europe while some do not do so. In other words, we are interested in highlighting both the presence of rerouting - depending on opportunities and constraints across routes - as well as the absence of rerouting, which we argue results from situations of immobility for those, both asylum seekers and "economic" migrants, who renounced departure from their country of origin or remain stranded in transit countries following changes of migration policies.

Figures 15 and 16, respectively, show the presence of Moroccans and Cameroonians, the two most dispersed nationalities as revealed in Table 4, across the four migration channels. Most notably, the figures illustrate different patterns of rerouting and dispersion. Although Morocco is the country bordering the Western channel, Figure 15 shows that Moroccan nationals as IBCs were mostly present on the Eastern channel in 2015, then on the Central channel in 2016 and 2017, and eventually on the Western channel from 2018 onwards. This suggests that some Moroccans recognized the opportunity of the brief "opening" of the Eastern channel in 2015 to migrate to Europe, before rerouting to the Central channel and eventually to the Western channel in the following years. Cameroonians likewise appear to have taken advantage of opportunities for migration across multiple channels. As shown in Figure 16, Cameroonians were first identified as IBCs primarily on the Western channel in 2014, then on the Eastern channel in 2015, and finally on the Central channel in 2016. This again indicates successive rerouting depending on changing conditions across routes over time.

Finally, Figure 17 illustrates the case of IBCs identified as Syrians. It reveals that, despite an initial, albeit relatively smaller presence on the Central channel in 2014, the 2015 spike in Syrian crossings through the Eastern channel was not followed by any significant form of rerouting following the closure of

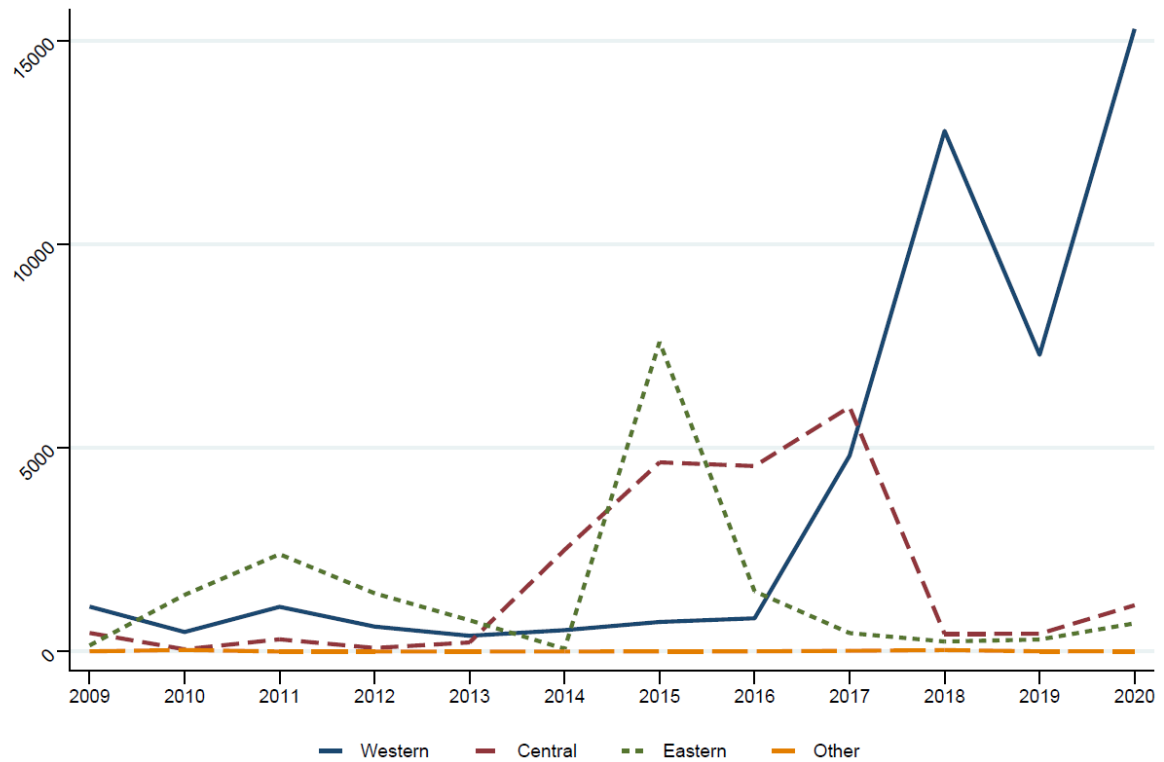
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<sup>25</sup> In this section it is important to keep in mind the number of IBCs which we examine vary greatly from one nationality to another: see Figure 1 for details. In addition, since our data start in 2009, we do not capture the closure of the Western Mediterranean route in the early 2000s for Moroccans and West Africans (Carling, 2007b; de Haas, 2007).

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that channel in 2016. We thus observe an abandonment of Syrian attempts to enter Europe, although most would likely obtain refugee status in Europe. This raises a concern that the closure of certain entry points may disproportionately affect individuals who would obtain protection in European destination states.

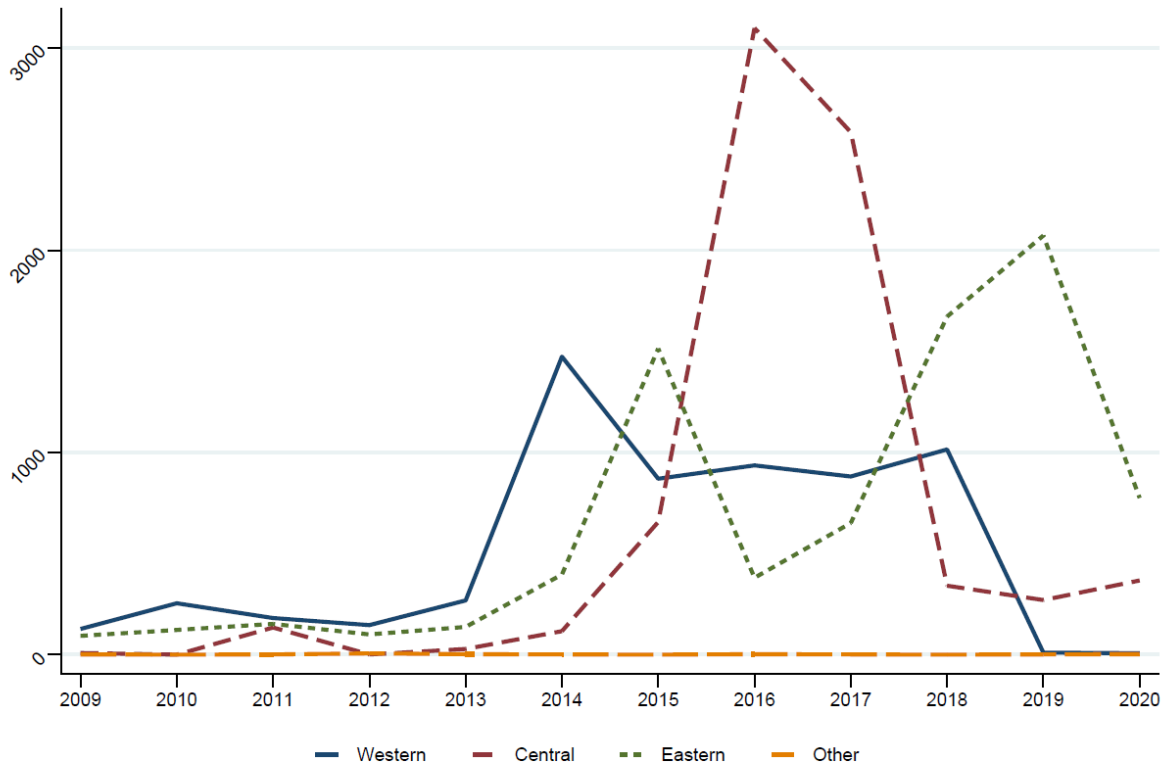
Figure 15: Moroccan Nationals as IBCs across Four Primary Channels 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021)

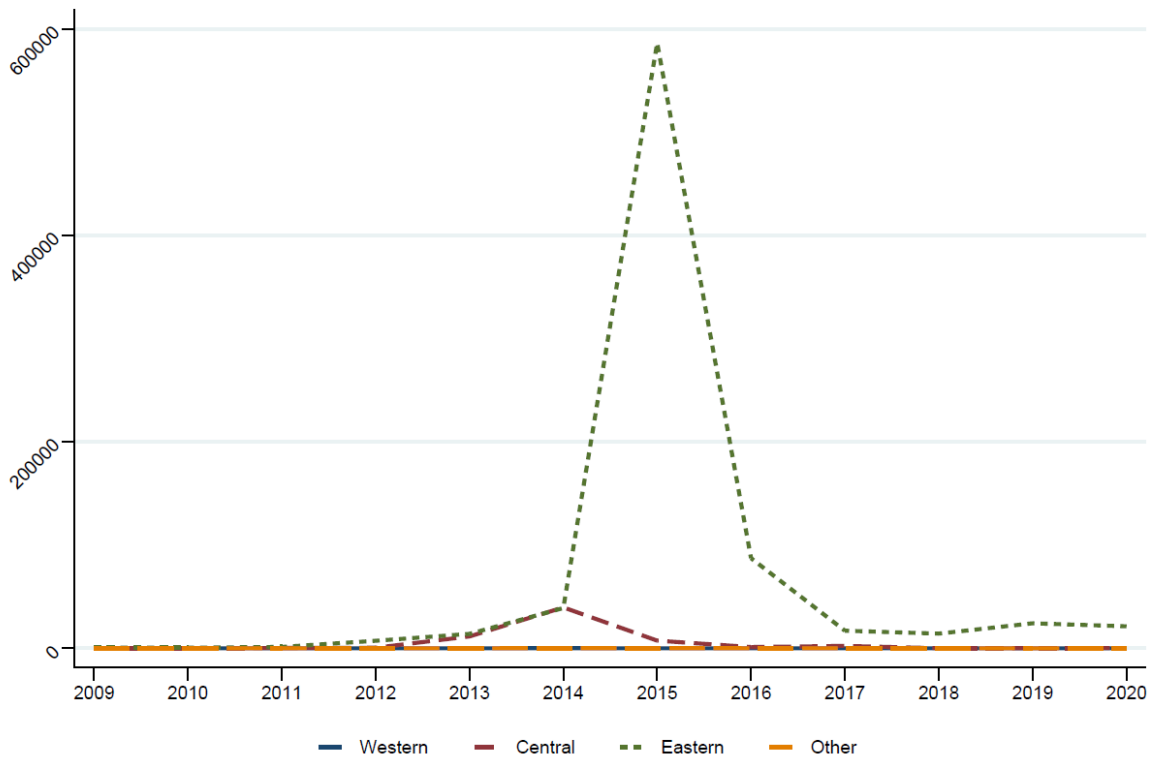
## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 16: Cameroonian Nationals as IBCs across Four Primary Channels 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021)

Figure 17: Syrians Nationals as IBCs across Four Primary Channels 2009-2020



Source: Frontex (2021)

### Rerouting, Abandonment and Stuckness: Hypotheses on Shifting Routes

Our analysis of geographical dispersion offers grounds for testing the assumption that migrants will change their trajectories to Europe if and when they face stricter border controls at particular locations. It may prove fruitful to identify when and to what extent some nationalities tend to change migration trajectories or “reroute” across time while other nationalities do not. Further research should investigate rerouting - depending on opportunities and constraints depending on the opening and closure of migration routes - as well as the absence of rerouting, which we argue results from situations of stuckness or abandonment.

Taking as given that migrants have agency and make independent decisions regarding their movements, we propose the notions of “rerouting,” “postponement,” and “abandonment” or “stuckness” as means to understand migration trajectories. We understand *rerouting* as a process of continuous adjustments and constant navigations for migrants depending on specific spatial dynamics (e.g. detours, transit points, changeable networks) as well as spatial frictions (e.g. borders, waiting, detention) (Schapendonk et al., 2018). We define *postponement* as a delay put in migration practice that can be observed as a lag in migration following border closures and returning following border openings. We define *abandonment* as encompassing the option of non-migration which is often understood as an outcome of aspiration-capability relation in migrants’ decisions. Finally, we understand *stuckness* as “a specific form of waiting that highlights a power-geometry where (...) immobility [of a particular group of people on the move] is exacerbated by the mobility of [another group]” (Straughan et al., 2020). We borrow the notion from studies that highlighted gendered inequalities in mobility and emphasize the durational aspect of immobility as well as their spatial dimension. As suggested by Schewel (2020), our data should apprehend immobility and assign differential migratory capacity across our two constructed categories of likely refugees and likely irregular migrants.

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Since we are observing IBCs across routes, rather than the choices migrants make, we refer to the interrupted migration trajectories as migration practices. In the cases we observe, we consider that abandonment is not simply equivalent to non-migration, but also to the practice or the fact of being stuck in transit countries such as Libya, Morocco or Turkey *en route* to Europe.

Here, our results suggest that rerouting is actually confined to few nationalities and concerns very few IBCs which is consistent with surveys and studies conducted on specific routes, from Sub-Saharan Africa notably (Fargues & Rango, 2020; Friebel et al., 2018). In contrast, most nationalities are typically tied to single, specific routes to Europe. The closure of migration routes thus mostly results in the abandonment (or postponement) of migration, as is intended by the adoption of restrictive migration policies. This outcome, however, raises the concern that policies affect - and in some cases primarily affect - individuals who migrate to flee violence and persecution, and who would therefore be recognized as refugees. In those cases, abandonment means that individuals are left stranded, often in dire conditions, or left to face their persecutors.

Altogether, detailed analysis of IBC data from Frontex provides two important insights. First, as delineated in Table 4, across multiple routes individuals who would likely obtain refugee status in Europe constitute roughly one-quarter to one-third of all IBCs. At the same time, on the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes “likely refugees” constitute the majority of IBCs since 2015. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the closure of certain migration routes can disproportionately affect refugees. In the remainder of this paper, we assess the degree to which externalization policies are behind the various dynamics that we have identified regarding IBCs across Europe’s borders.

As mentioned above, we do not explore at this stage why and how migrants potentially shift routes. However, our results demonstrate possibilities to engage constructively with the literature on mobility trajectories: since we observe the dynamics of mobility across time, across routes and across

nationalities we notably provide statistical evidence to explore further how migration practices interact with regulatory settings and border policies during different migration phases.

### **5. Externalization: Trends and Impacts**

In this section, we conduct a preliminary analysis of the impact of externalization policies on migration flows. Our work here constitutes an initial examination. Looking forward, we plan to develop a broader analysis that will include additional policy instruments and will explore the impact of externalization on migration in transit countries. In this report, we first present a descriptive analysis of trends in externalization policies, based on our original data collection, and then assess more specifically the impact of readmission agreements on IBCs.

#### **Describing Policy Trends: Geographical Expansion and Informalization**

We begin by examining overall trends in the development of bilateral and multilateral migration policy instruments involving European countries and the EU, on the one hand, and third countries of origin worldwide, on the other hand. At this stage of our research, we aim to identify trends concerning the number and type of policy instruments developed in the last two decades, without discussing the various reasons driving the adoption of these policies and therefore setting aside the instigators of migration policy development. This descriptive analysis is the first step toward the exploration of externalization dynamics in times of crisis, which we will develop further moving forward. In the following section, we describe how the 2015 crisis impacted externalization and the extent to which it contributed to its acceleration as well as to changes in the nature, scope, and geographic targets of different policy instruments.

Externalization policies were first adopted by Western European states in the 1980s and 1990s. At the time, these policies primarily targeted partners which would be subject to visa liberalization and Eastern European states which, following the end of the Cold War, were seen as the likeliest sources of

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substantial and possibly uncontrolled migration to Western Europe. The geography of European externalization still largely reflects this trend, as revealed by Figures 21 and 22, which illustrate the geographical scope of readmission agreements and implementing protocols to EURAs, respectively. In turn, in the 2000s, the EU and its member states signed migration-related partnerships and developed cooperation with countries bordering the Mediterranean (notably Turkey, Morocco, Libya, etc.) and slowly expanded their efforts at cooperation further south on the African continent through bilateral and regional multilateral negotiations (Carrera et al., 2019; Mazzella & Perrin, 2019; van Ballegooij & Navarra, 2018). In addition, in the 2000s the scope of externalization policies also expanded to encompass both irregular migration as well as issues of asylum (Milner & Betts, 2007) which, as mentioned earlier, raised significant political, legal, and academic controversies (Crépeau & Atak, 2016; Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2014). In particular, European states have steadily sought to expand the scope of readmission agreements to cover nationals beyond those of the signing partner countries. In other words, the EU and its member states have sought to include readmission of third country nationals who had transited through partner states in existing or future agreements. This trend is singled out in European policy documents as a main obstacle to both the expansion of existing agreements, the signing of new ones, and their effective implementation (European Court of Auditors, 2021). This proves particularly important to understanding the pivotal role played by so-called “transit countries” in the management of irregular migration to Europe, and of first countries of asylum declared “safe” by the EU, as places of containment for asylum seekers. Such reticence might explain why the number of bilateral and EU readmission agreements (EURAs) plateaued in 2014 in the wake of the “migration crisis” as shown by Figures 18 and 19, respectively.

Additionally, the EU and member states have come to use a growing variety of policy instruments involving bilateral and multilateral cooperation at various levels (Kunz et al., 2011; Lavenex, 2016; Scholten & Penninx, 2016), and

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including both formal and informal tools and processes (Cassarino, 2007). Although externalization encompasses a diverse array of policies, at this stage we focus exclusively on formal cooperative instruments between 31 European destination states and all potential countries of origin worldwide. As discussed above, we collected data on the formal cooperative measures delineated in Table 1. Figures 18-22 illustrate the aggregate trends for different types of bilateral and multilateral agreements. In Figure 18, we focus on the aggregate number of bilateral agreements and bilateral Implementing Protocols (IPs) to EURAs adopted between European destination states and countries of origin over time. In Figure 19, we focus on agreements between the EU and countries of origin. Finally, in Figures 20-22 we illustrate a breakdown in the adoption of all relevant policies across destination and origin states, respectively.

Our data collection begins with the year 2002, by which point 96 bilateral agreements had already been adopted between 31 European destination states and numerous partners around the world (excluding agreements between European states themselves). By 2018, the number had grown to 514, including bilateral IPs to EURAs. As shown in Figure 18, the primary externalization instrument adopted between states has persistently been readmission agreements, which facilitate the deportation of individuals with an irregular status who have the nationality of one of the two state parties. Although the agreements are reciprocal, deportation of European nationals are relatively rare. European states have also negotiated other agreements, such as migration management agreements, as well as primarily informal instruments with various partners, all of which consist of various measures covering various policy issues (border control, training and labor migration, development aid, etc.). Our data show that, while the share of adoption of purely bilateral readmission agreements among all bilateral externalization instruments has declined, the rise of IPs to EURAs until the 2015 crisis indicates continued commitment to using readmission agreements as a means to facilitate deportation and deter “irregular migration.” In turn, the crisis is linked to a plateauing in the number of new IP EURAs. As mentioned earlier, in the

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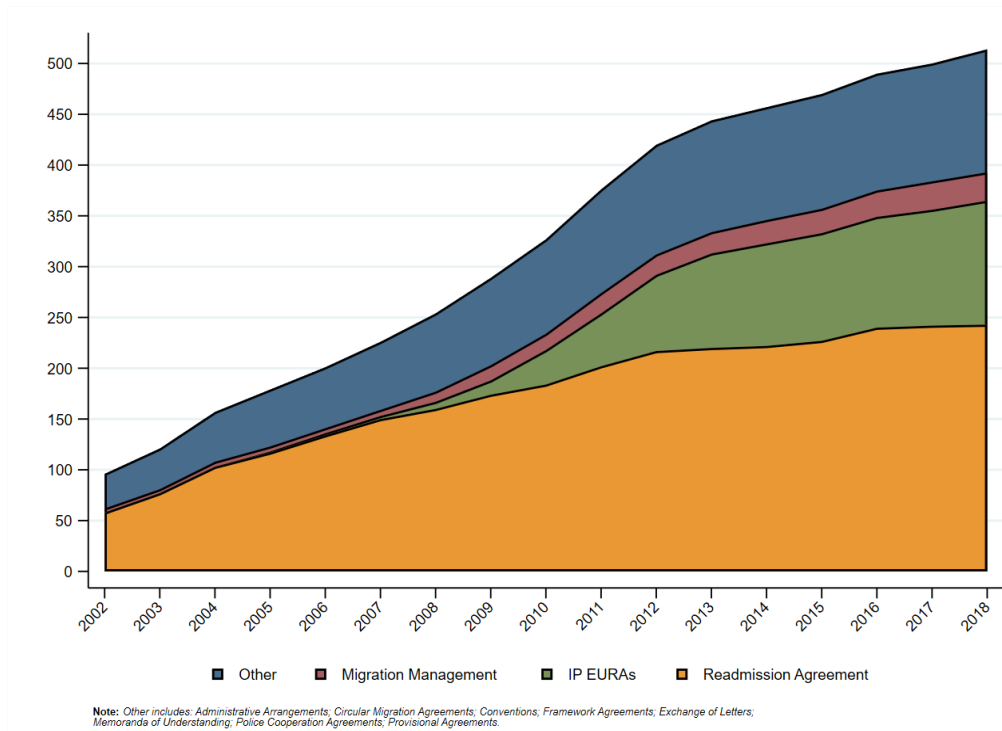
wake of large inflows of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, potential partners of EU multilateral agreements became reluctant to sign binding agreements that obligated them to readmit third country nationals as well as their own.

Overall, our data reveals the steady expansion of externalization policies since the early 2000s as a strategy for managing migration flows led first by European states at the bilateral level, followed by the EU at the multilateral level, notably after the 2015 crisis. At the same time, the instruments adopted vary across time and member states. Although the scope and impacts of EU policies since 2015 remain contested, the crisis led to the adoption of major political and policy initiatives, such as the 2015 European Agenda on Migration, the 2015 Khartoum Process and the European Trust Fund for Africa, and the 2016 EU-Turkey Joint Statement. Figure 19 reveals the spike in the number of instruments - particularly informal measures - adopted in the wake of the 2015 crisis. Interestingly, our data do not show significant growth with regards to the number of bilateral agreements since 2015, but rather the continuation of previous trends while the crisis marked an end to the adoption of multilateral readmission agreements.

Lastly, our data suggest that informal measures have been increasingly preferred to formal agreements as a means for furthering externalization. It also reaffirms that we will need to expand our scope and examine additional policy measures (such as foreign aid), particularly more informal regulatory devices, to obtain a more comprehensive assessment of the impact of crises on migration policy development. Illustrating the hypothesis of informalization, the Rabat and Khartoum Processes, two regional dialogues, epitomize these new dimensions of externalization from the 2000s to the 2010s. They are non-binding agreements that seek to foster collaboration on migration issues at all levels among other development objectives and address migration and asylum dynamics across Western and Eastern Africa. By 2018, these two "Processes" included 25 African states along with the EU and its members.

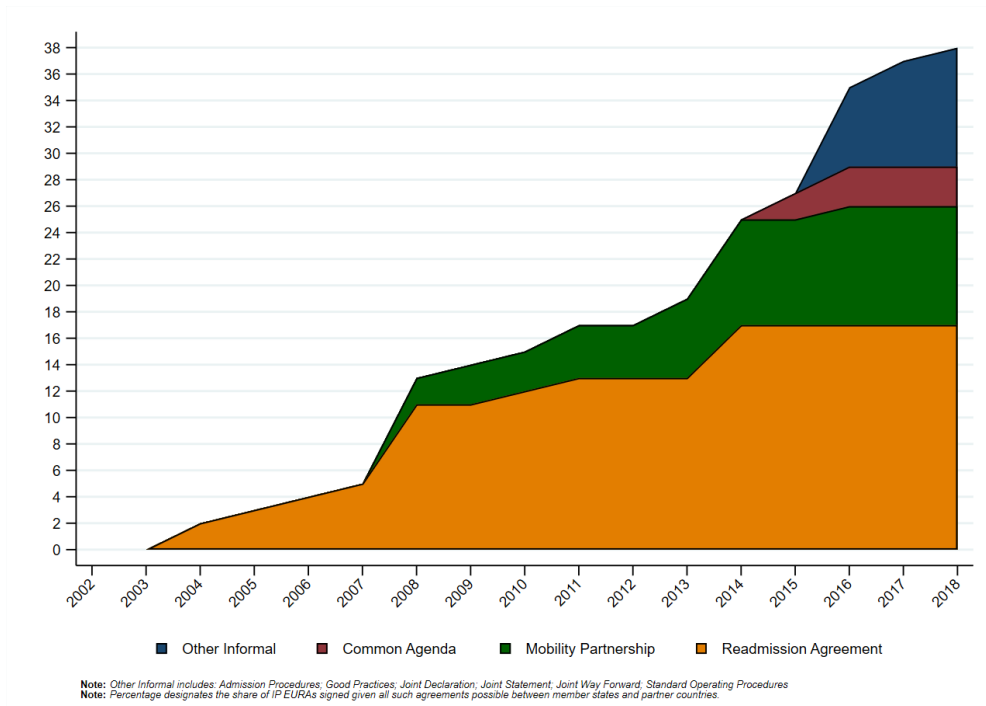
## D8.1. Externalization Policies

Figure 18: Bilateral Externalization Instruments and Implementing Protocols to EURAs 2002-2018



Sources: Underlying data derived from Cassarino (2020) and Migreurop (2021).

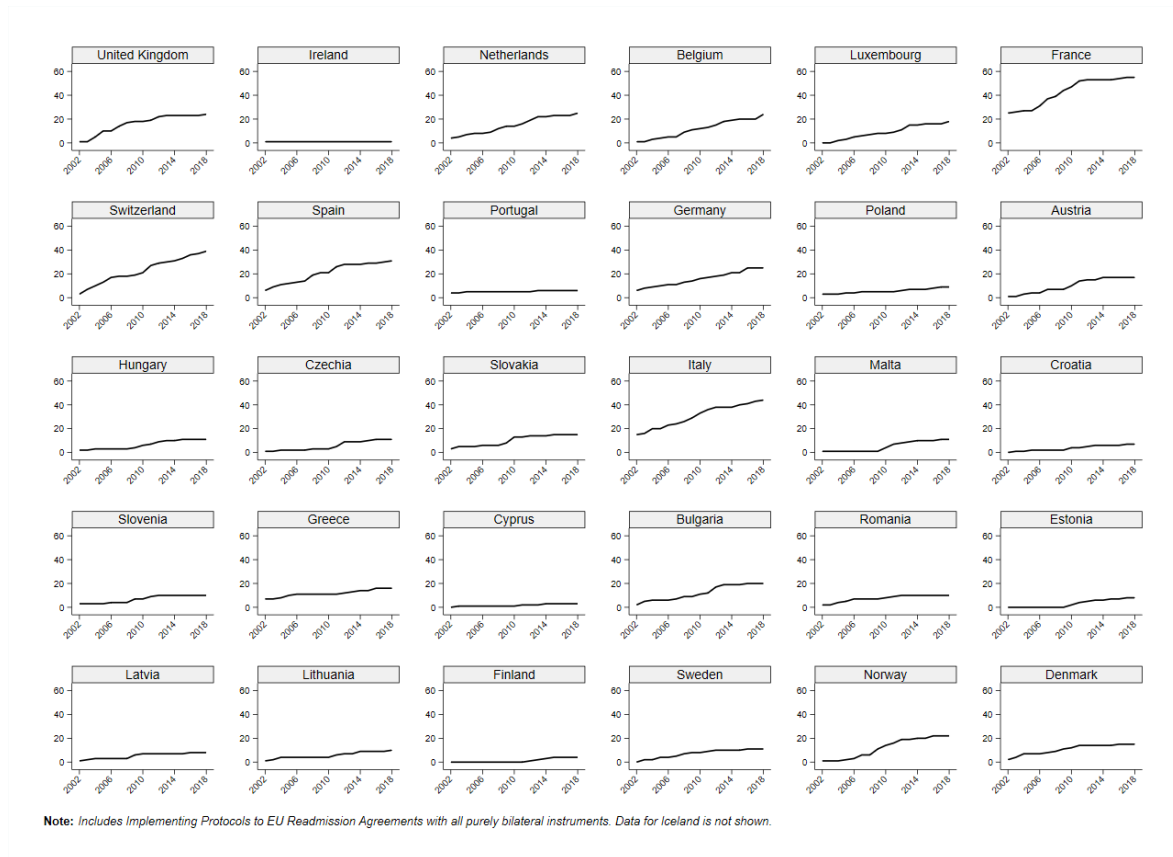
Figure 19: EU Externalization Instruments 2002-2018



Sources: Underlying data derived from Cassarino (2020) and Migreurop (2021).

## D8.1. Externalization Policies

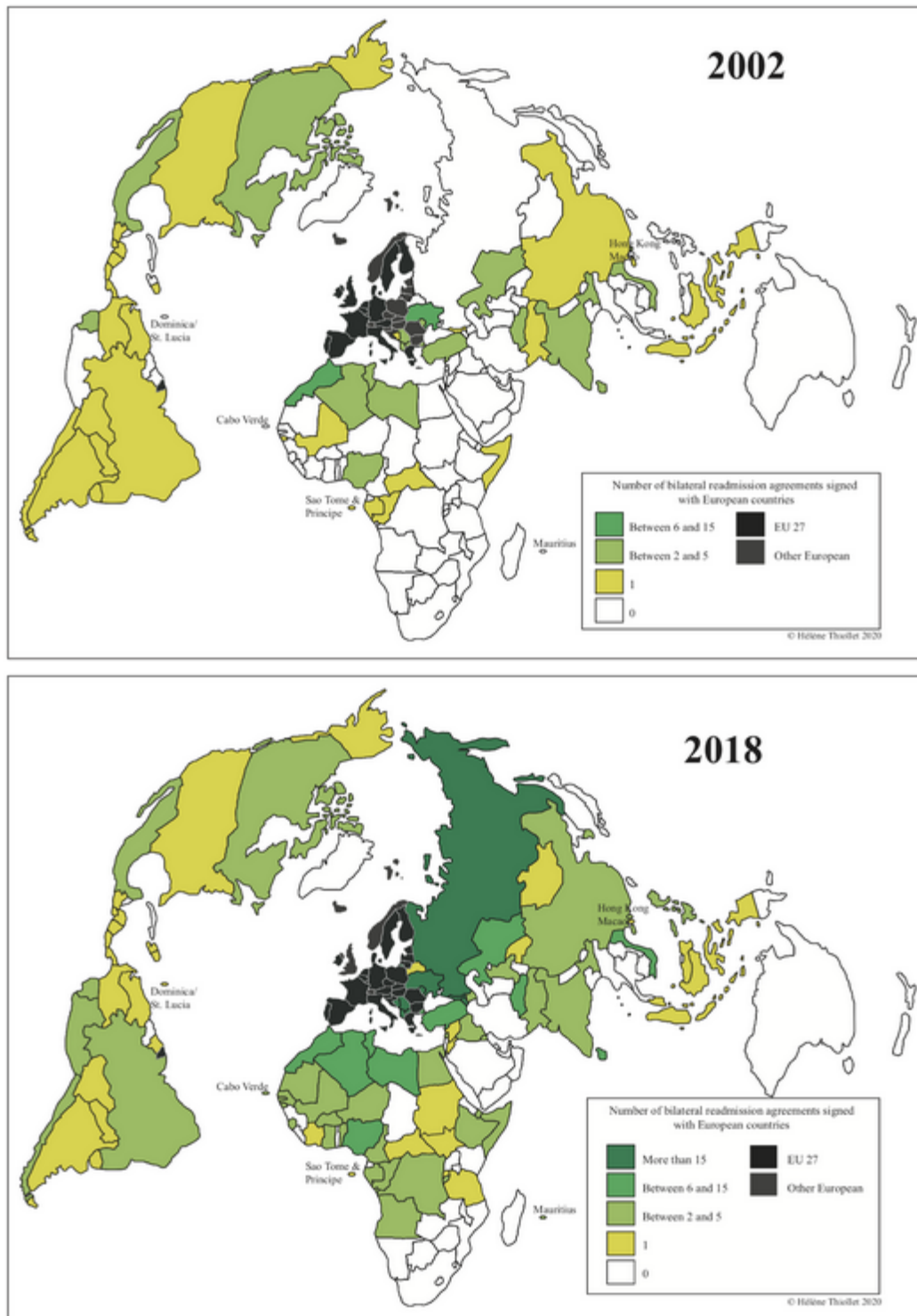
Figure 20: Total Bilateral Externalization Instruments by Destination States 2002-2018



Sources: Underlying data derived from Cassarino (2020) and Migreurop (2021).

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Figure 21: Bilateral Externalization Instruments Adopted by Partner States 2002 and 2018



Sources: Underlying data derived from Cassarino (2020) and Migreurop (2021).

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Table 5: EU Readmission Agreements and Bilateral Implementing Protocols by 2018

Partner Country	Year EURA Signed	IP EURA in 2018
Russia	2007	25
Moldova	2008	18
Serbia	2008	17
Albania	2006	12
Georgia	2011	11
Montenegro	2008	9
Ukraine	2008	8
North Macedonia	2008	7
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2008	6
Armenia	2014	6
Hong Kong	2004	1
Sri Lanka	2005	1
Turkey	2014	1
Macao	2004	0
Pakistan	2010	0
Azerbaijan	2014	0
Cabo Verde	2014	0

**Sources:** Underlying data derived from Cassarino (2020) and Migreurop (2021).

In tandem with bilateral agreements, following the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam, which gave to the EU a co-competence over migration policy, and since the adoption of the “Global Approach to Migration and Mobility” in 2005, the EU has likewise adopted multilateral agreements to advance cooperation on migration with the aim of complementing and bolstering member state efforts to stem “irregular migration” flows. Figure 19 illustrates the growth of these EU multilateral agreements, which included various attempts at advancing the externalization of migration control.

Similarly to the bilateral level, the EU has deployed a strategy of seeking to negotiate readmission agreements with partner states. However, potential

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partners have been loath to cooperate with the EU and have resisted pressure to accept nationals of third states who have transited through their territories while on route to Europe - a central element of EURAs. By 2014, only 17 EURAs had been adopted, and no new agreements have been negotiated since that time. Moreover, these agreements must be supplemented by bilateral Implementing Protocols (IPs) between individual member states and the partner countries in question. Table 6 delineates the number of such agreements, and the percentage that they represent of the total potential IPs that could have been adopted between EU member states and all relevant partner countries each year. As of 2018, 112 such IPs have been adopted, representing roughly 26% of all possible IPs between EU member states and the 17 partner countries that had signed an EURA by that year. At the same time, the number of states that have been willing to enter into Common Agendas or Mobility Partnerships - agreements which imply broader coordination on migration issues tied to a promise of visa liberalization in return - have been limited.

Figure 20 further demonstrates the significant variation in the adoption of bilateral agreements by European states. It illustrates the total number of bilateral instruments adopted by 30 European states (with Iceland the excluded 31st state) with all partner states, including purely bilateral instruments and bilateral IPs to EURAs. Although there is clear growth in the number of agreements across all European states except for Ireland, the absolute number of agreements as well as the rate of growth vary significantly. France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, and the Netherlands have adopted a significant number of instruments, while Portugal, Finland, Ireland, and Cyprus have evidently not made externalization central to their strategies for migration management.

In turn, Figure 21 illustrates the number of bilateral externalization instruments and IP EURAs adopted by partner states around the world with all 31 European states in 2002 and 2018. It reveals the growth in the number of partner states which have agreed to cooperate with European governments

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and the growth in the number of instruments overall. It also indicates which partner countries have been most willing to enter into agreements and cooperate with European states on migration, namely states of the Western Balkans and the post-Soviet space in Eastern Europe and, to a lesser extent, North Africa. Although we do not examine the reasons behind this variation in detail, it is very likely driven by the fact that many of these states hope to accede to the EU, or simply seek closer economic or political ties with the EU and its members. The promise of visa liberalization may have bolstered the willingness of these states to cooperate on issues of migration control. Although certain states in Northern Africa and beyond have also adopted various instruments, numerous states whose nationals constitute significant numbers of irregular migrants or asylum seekers have few or no relationships with European partners.

Altogether, efforts at externalizing migration control have steadily expanded, encompassing an ever-greater number of partner countries around the world. At the same time, behind this general trend there has been substantial variation in the emphasis on externalization with respect to both European states and partner states. Within Europe, primary migrant destinations such as France have made externalization an important component of their migration management strategies, while other states such as Finland have adopted few, if any, such policies. In turn, states that seek to externalize migration control have found the states of the Western Balkans and the post-Soviet space, including Russia, to be the most willing to collaborate. Otherwise, they have developed scattered relations with various partners around the world. In parallel, EU efforts at developing a coordinated externalization strategy have remained nascent, despite attracting disproportionate media attention.

### Preliminary Impact Analysis on Readmission Agreements

Having described overarching trends in irregular inflows to Europe as well as external migration and asylum policies, we seek to evaluate whether the former is affected by the latter. In this preliminary impact analysis, we focus on bilateral readmission agreements (RAs) as a central externalization policy instrument. In addition, we also examine IPs to EURAs, which are a directly analogous policy. We focus on these policies first as they are the primary instrument adopted both bilaterally and by the EU. In addition, they allow us to focus on the direct effects policies have on the nationals of the state parties to the respective agreements. Ultimately, we seek to evaluate the potential role of readmission agreements in reducing irregular border crossings.

While the primary objective of readmission agreements is to facilitate the deportation of irregular migrants identified within the territory of a European state, it is hypothesized that these instruments deter individuals from attempting irregular border crossings, with an additional concern that either deportation or deterrence amounts to *refoulement* when impacting asylum seekers (Vollmer, 2016). Deterrence in this context is ambivalent: it refers both to the *motivations* of potential migrants or asylum seekers to leave and choose a route and to their *capabilities* to do so (Kent et al., 2019). At this stage, we conflate both dimensions and consider that readmission agreement can serve to deter potential irregular migration by affecting both motivations and capabilities. It is possible that individuals who are contemplating migration to Europe may know that their government has entered into a readmission agreement with a European partner, whenever that occurs, and that this raises the risk of deportation if they are captured in that European state. It follows that, all else equal, the more readmission agreements signed by a state of origin, the lower the likelihood that nationals of that state will attempt to cross into Europe irregularly. However, this effect may be mitigated for individuals who are confident that they will be able to obtain asylum in a European host country. Thus, the distinction we establish between likely refugees and likely migrants is important and we expect to find heterogeneous impacts of these

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instruments depending on the likelihood of nationals of a state of origin to obtain asylum.

Importantly, readmission agreements primarily concern the nationals of the states that have entered into the agreement. Recently, both national governments and the EU have attempted to pressure states to acquiesce to clauses within these agreements whereby they will accept third country nationals who have transited through their territories *en route* to Europe. The content of readmission agreements has thus increasingly come to deal with “transit migration,” which constitutes an important trend in the dynamics of externalization. In turn, researchers have criticized the ambivalence of the notion of “transit” (Collyer et al., 2012; Düvell, 2012). These clauses, however, are largely limited to recent agreements and EURAs. Regardless of whether such clauses are included, we focus at this stage only on the respective nationals of state parties, and bracket the issue of transiting individuals who could ultimately be deported to those states they crossed while travelling to Europe and which have signed many readmission agreements if they are caught with an irregular status in Europe. We will be expanding our analyses to consider migrants in transit countries as we continue our research.

To evaluate the effect of readmission agreements, we develop panel regression models using data on IBCs by route and origin countries across time from 2009-2018. The dependent variable (DV) in our model constitutes the total number of IBCs as well as the breakdown of IBCs as likely irregular migrants and likely refugees. Given that the number of IBCs is highly left-skewed, we deploy the natural log transformation in our models.

The primary independent variables of interest in our models constitute the number of bilateral readmission agreements adopted by the origin countries of IBC nationals with 31 European destination states, as well the number of IPs to EURAs they have adopted with those 31 states. We first develop models keeping these variables separate as they represent different types of agreements, with certain migrant origin states adopting both a readmission agreement and an IP with a specific European partner. We also

develop models aggregating these categories to evaluate whether there is a joint effect. In either case, **we hypothesize that the greater the number of readmission agreements a country signs over time, the smaller the number of nationals of that country identified as IBCs.** This should be the case for both readmission agreements as well as for IPs to EURAs.

It is highly plausible, however, that neither of these types of agreements has an impact on irregular migration, and, in fact, we expect no significant effect. Such a null finding would indicate that individuals are either unaware or are undeterred by these agreements as they consider migration to Europe. Moreover, we anticipate that any effect will be primarily relevant for “likely irregular migrants” as opposed to “likely refugees.” Individuals who are more confident that they will obtain asylum in Europe are less likely to be deterred by readmission agreements of any kind.

Across our models we include several important control variables, which capture time-varying push factors of emigration, including (1) violence in countries of origin, (2) the GDP per capita of countries of origin, (3) the population of countries of origin, (4) democratic governance in countries of origin, and (5) foreign aid promised by the 31 European states to each country of origin.

First, violence in a country of origin likely spurs greater migration, and leads many to attempt to find safety and opportunity in Europe. As a measure of violence, we include the number of battle deaths recorded in the country as identified by the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020; Sundberg & Melander, 2013). We anticipate that battle deaths will be positively associated with the number of IBCs.

Second, although the relationship may not be linear, it is plausible that the wealthier a country of origin the fewer the IBCs of that nationality will be identified.<sup>26</sup> Third, we control for the population of the country of origin as

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<sup>26</sup> It is possible that steadily greater wealth first increases then decreases migration, leading to an inverted U shape relationship that has been discussed in the literature on economic development and migration (Clemens, 2014; de Haas, 2007).

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greater populations are likely associated with greater numbers of migrants. Data on both GDP per capita and national populations are derived from the Quality of Government Database (Dahlberg et al., 2020) and supplemented by data from the CIA World Factbook (CIA, 2020).

Fourth, the more democratic a country of origin, the fewer nationals of that country will likely desire to migrate to seek asylum or aspire to better governance in Europe. We thus adopt a measure of democratic governance from the Varieties of Democracy (VDEM) database, averaging the scores across the five governance measures - polyarchy, liberal democracy, deliberative democracy, participatory democracy, and egalitarian democracy - developed by the project. Higher values on the 0 to 1 scale indicate greater levels of democratic governance on numerous dimensions.

Fifth, foreign aid is represented by official development assistance (ODA) commitments, a variable we include as it may also favor economic development in origin countries, and, hence, shape the economic incentives individuals face with respect to whether to stay in the origin country. Moreover, ODA can also be considered as an additional form of externalization, with the underlying goal being to bolster the capacity of an origin state to prevent irregular emigration while reducing the number of individuals which seek to engage in such emigration. In line with other studies of the effects of foreign aid on migration (Bermeo & Leblang, 2015), we calculate the total number of ODA commitments from the 31 European destination states promised to each country of origin. The data is derived from the OECD, and we remain agnostic as to whether we should expect a positive or negative effect on the number of IBCs given the controversy among scholars and policy-makers. All control variables except for democratic governance are highly left-skewed and we therefore deploy the natural log transformations in our models.

As a final control variable, we add a time-varying binary variable capturing whether nationals of a country of origin can benefit from visa free travel to the Schengen Area. This variable takes the value of 1 once nationals of a country can enter the Schengen Area without first obtaining a visa. This

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“visa liberalization” policy measure in our regression framework reflects our expectation that offering safe legal channels to reach Europe should decrease the flows of irregular border crossings. Moreover, controlling for this variable should allow us to disentangle the effects of externalization measures such as bilateral readmission agreements or IPs to EURAs from this direct effect of opening the borders of the Schengen Area to certain nationals.

In addition to these origin-specific, time-varying control variables, in all our models we include route-year fixed effects to control for all fixed and time varying route characteristics that may affect the number of IBCs entering Europe across routes over time, such as the geographic characteristics of a route (sea, mountains, etc.) or efforts put in place by European countries to close a specific route (i.e. through the EU-Turkey agreement after 2016 regarding the Western Mediterranean route, or through route-specific Frontex investments). We also include route-origin fixed effects to control for the specific links (such as geographic distance) between an origin country and a route, which are expected to affect the likelihood an individual chooses among different routes when considering how to reach Europe.<sup>27</sup> Adding all these fixed effects allows us to control for a large range of drivers of irregular migration, which may otherwise be confounded with the effects of our variables of interest - the bilateral readmission agreements and IPs to EURAs.

Lastly, as a secondary set of analyses, we further evaluate the relationship between policies and IBC flows by entering the weighted average rejection rate of asylum applications as an additional control variable. With respect to IBCs in total, we anticipate higher average rejection rates will deter individuals from attempting to enter Europe irregularly. Moreover, we develop models interacting the rejection rate with our policy variables regarding the number of bilateral RAs and IPs to EURAs. These interactions will allow us to assess the heterogeneous impacts of externalization policies on nationals of origin countries, which are expected to be larger for migrants who are subject

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<sup>27</sup> In regression analyses not shown here, we found that, as would be expected, the effect of distance is very strong and negative when we do not control for these route-origin fixed effects.

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to larger rejection rates of asylum applications. This will reinforce the findings from our initial models, which, as a preliminary step, represent likely irregular migrants and likely refugees as dependent variables. We anticipate that policies will have a deterrent effect on both categories of migrants, but that the effect will be stronger for “likely irregular migrants.”

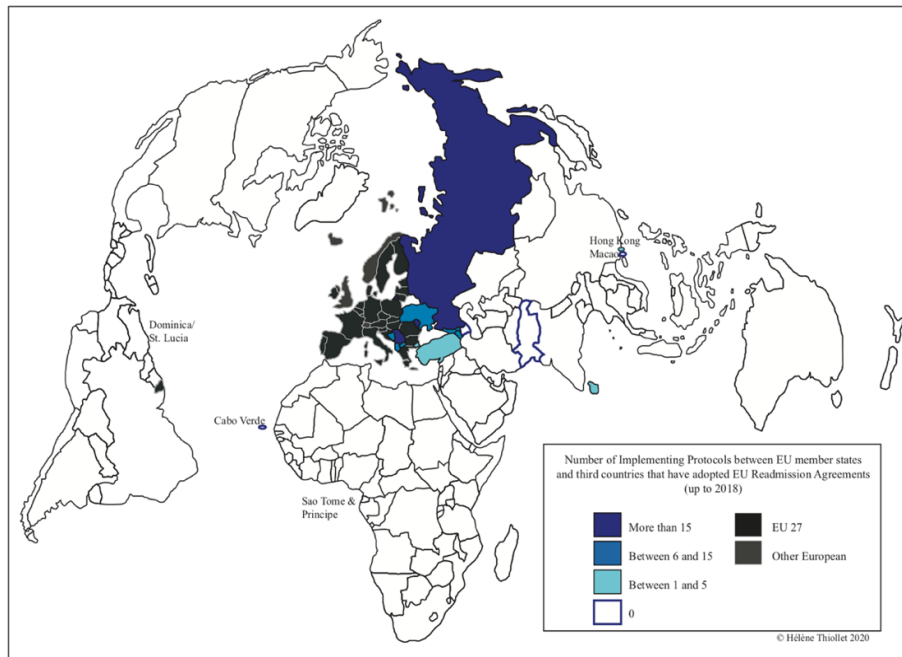
In both our initial and secondary results, we lag by one-year the values of all our independent variables before inclusion in our models, as the effects of policies may be delayed. Lagging also allows us to allay concerns regarding the endogeneity between flows and policies. Endogeneity issues in our framework of analysis would lead to some biases of our estimates and we therefore need to put a word of caution if we were to interpret the estimates we find as causal impacts of externalization policies. All migration policies are likely to be endogenous as they may respond to the flows of migrants willing to cross the borders (i.e. reverse causality) or may be simultaneously determined by alternative factors, which also affect the flows of migrants and are not necessarily controlled for in our regressions. However, we minimize these issues by lagging all explanatory variables, by adding numerous control variables, which may have confounding effects, such as the degree of democracy in origin countries or the presence of visa liberalization, as well as by including route-year and route-origin fixed effects.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Given our focus on measuring the effects of several components of migration policies together, we could not adopt the alternative approach based on instrumental variable methods (as done by Fasani & Frattini, 2020), which would require finding as many instruments as policy variables of interest and believing in as many exclusion restriction assumptions.

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Figure 22: Implementing Protocols to EURAs by Partner States in 2018



Sources: Underlying data derived from Cassarino (2020) and Migreurop (2021).

Table 6: Correlates of Ln IBCs, Ln Likely Irregular Migrants, and Ln Likely Refugees

	Ln IBCs	Ln IBCs	Ln Irregular	Ln Irregular	Ln Refugees	Ln Refugees
Bilateral Readmission + IP EURAs <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.019*** (0.005)		-0.014*** (0.004)		-0.012*** (0.004)	
Bilateral Readmission <sub>t-1</sub>		-0.003 (0.009)		0.000 (0.009)		-0.004 (0.008)
IP EURAs <sub>t-1</sub>		-0.027*** (0.006)		-0.022*** (0.006)		-0.015*** (0.005)
Ln Battle Deaths <sub>t-1</sub>	0.042*** (0.006)	0.042*** (0.006)	0.024*** (0.005)	0.024*** (0.005)	0.048*** (0.005)	0.048*** (0.005)
Ln GDPPC <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.038 (0.080)	-0.040 (0.080)	0.143* (0.075)	0.141* (0.075)	-0.059 (0.065)	-0.059 (0.065)
Ln Population <sub>t-1</sub>	0.535*** (0.195)	0.508*** (0.195)	0.938*** (0.181)	0.911*** (0.182)	0.333** (0.159)	0.320** (0.159)
Democratic Governance <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.445*** (0.156)	-0.460*** (0.157)	-0.304** (0.145)	-0.318** (0.146)	-0.412*** (0.127)	-0.419*** (0.127)
Visa Liberalization <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.191*** (0.051)	-0.182*** (0.051)	-0.156*** (0.047)	-0.148*** (0.048)	-0.165*** (0.042)	-0.161*** (0.042)
Ln ODA Per Capita <sub>t-1</sub>	130.402 (230.091)	155.057 (230.425)	-0.838 (214.005)	22.528 (214.315)	252.831 (187.321)	264.606 (187.615)
Constant	-7.500** (3.305)	-7.054** (3.313)	-15.487*** (3.074)	-15.064*** (3.082)	-4.405 (2.691)	-4.192 (2.698)
Route-Year Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Route-Origin Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	11646	11646	11646	11646	11646	11646
R <sup>2</sup>	0.153	0.153	0.147	0.147	0.153	0.154

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Table 7: Correlates of Ln IBCs  
given Weighted Average Asylum Rejection Rates

	Ln IBCs	Ln IBCs	Ln IBCs	Ln IBCs
Bilateral Readmission <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.015 (0.046)	-0.031 (0.049)
IP EURAs <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	-0.026*** (0.007)	0.011 (0.046)	-0.026*** (0.007)	0.021 (0.049)
Ln Battle Deaths <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	0.039*** (0.006)	0.039*** (0.006)	0.040*** (0.006)	0.040*** (0.006)
Ln GDPPC <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	-0.005 (0.092)	-0.004 (0.092)	-0.004 (0.092)	-0.002 (0.092)
Ln Population <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	0.741*** (0.236)	0.719*** (0.237)	0.744*** (0.236)	0.721*** (0.237)
Democratic Governance <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	-0.523*** (0.175)	-0.527*** (0.175)	-0.522*** (0.175)	-0.525*** (0.175)
Visa Liberalization <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	-0.172** (0.069)	-0.168** (0.069)	-0.172** (0.069)	-0.168** (0.069)
Ln ODA Per Capita <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	130.418 (273.097)	141.609 (273.449)	131.087 (273.127)	146.271 (273.587)
Asylum Rejection Rate <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>	-0.002*** (0.001)	-0.002*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)
Asylum Rejection Rate <sub><i>t-1</i></sub> × IP EURAs <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>		-0.000 (0.001)		-0.001 (0.001)
Asylum Rejection Rate <sub><i>t-1</i></sub> × Bilateral Readmission <sub><i>t-1</i></sub>			0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Constant	-10.935*** (4.003)	-10.583*** (4.026)	-10.987*** (4.009)	-10.625*** (4.027)
Route-Year Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Route-Origin Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	10251	10251	10251	10251
R <sup>2</sup>	0.176	0.176	0.176	0.176

Table 6 delineates the results of our initial regression analyses. In the Table, the natural log of the total number of IBCs is the dependent variable (DV) for the first pair of models, the natural log of the total number of IBCs estimated to be “likely irregular migrants” is the DV for the second pair of models, and the natural log of the total number of IBCs estimated to be “likely refugees” is the DV for the third pair of models. In the first, third, and fifth models, the key independent variable of interest constitutes the aggregate number of bilateral RAs and IPs to EURAs adopted by a country of origin with European partners each year. In the second, fourth, and sixth models, we separate the measures of the number of bilateral RAs and IPs to EURAs to evaluate their respective effects. Our models offer initial evidence that readmission agreements - specifically IP EURAs - may have a deterrent effect on migrants seeking to reach Europe. Specifically, our measure of aggregate agreements

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(bilateral RAs plus IPs to EURAs) is negative and significant in our first model. Thus, the more agreements that an origin country has with European partners, the fewer nationals of that country have been identified by Frontex as IBCs. Our second model demonstrates that this effect is driven entirely by IPs to EURAs as the coefficient on purely bilateral RAs is no longer significant. In other words, the more IPs to EURAs signed by an origin country with European countries the fewer the IBCs of that nationality are detected. This is not the case, however, with bilateral readmission agreements.

Thus, our results provide preliminary evidence that IPs to EURAs may deter individuals from migration. Specifically, the coefficient for IPs to EURAs in our second model in Table 6 indicates that, all else equal, the adoption of one additional IP by a country of origin is associated with 2.7% fewer IBCs identified with that state's nationality - a relationship that is neither very large nor completely negligible. The coefficient, however, concerns the average effect across the nine routes, and therefore may be higher on the primary routes taken by nationals of a particular country. We therefore have a notable effect that warrants consideration.

Although our result is robust across our models, we are circumspect that IPs to EURAs indeed have a deterrence effect on irregular migration to Europe. As we show in Figure 22 and Table 6, as of 2018, only 17 states have signed an EURA, and, of those 17, only several Western Balkan and post-Soviet states have signed significant numbers of IPs to activate the EU agreements. Instead, we believe that other underlying factors are driving the identified relationship. Given the countries of origin that have adopted IPs to EURAs, we surmise that these agreements are a proxy measure of a deeper commitment to reduce irregular migration. The countries of the Western Balkans and post-Soviet Eastern Europe are interested in joining the EU, or at least in developing closer ties with this group of states. As such, they are likely to be most committed to cooperating with the EU and its members with respect to reducing irregular migration. It is likely that this underlying commitment is being captured by our measure of IPs to EURAs, rather than a specific deterrent effect tied to those

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agreements. Further work using more data on border controls and other types of cooperation is required to confirm this hypothesis.

Many states that have signed numerous IPs to EURA have been granted visa-free travel to the Schengen Area for their nationals. The effect of this visa liberalization could be confounded with the effect of IPs to EURAs; therefore, we controlled for this in our regressions and found that the effect of IPs to EURAs are robust. Our results confirm a very strong and significant effect of visa liberalization, which unsurprisingly is associated with a decrease in the flows of irregular border crossers by 15% to 19% (Tables 6 and 7). In line with recent proposals to multiply legal channels to Europe to fight against human smuggling, notably through temporary visas against smuggling (Auriol et al., 2020), this result highlights that visa liberalization could be an effective way of decreasing irregular border crossings to Europe. Another important result is that visa liberalization affects "likely refugees" and "likely irregular migrants" with the same magnitude (see Table 6): further work is needed to uncover the mechanism underlying this result.

In contrast, we feel confident that bilateral readmission agreements are not associated with IBCs. The coefficient for purely bilateral readmission agreements is insignificant. Our evidence thus confirms our hypothesis that individuals who seek to reach Europe are either unaware or undeterred by the fact that their national governments have signed readmission agreements with European partners. While these agreements may facilitate deportations, they do not deter migrants. That said, we need to assess their potential effects on nationals transiting through states and their potential to "reroute" migrants towards states which have signed relatively fewer such agreements.

Looking at the alternative measures of our dependent variable - "likely irregular migrants" and "likely refugees" - it is notable that our results are consistent across all models. In other words, IPs to EURAs are negatively and significantly associated with the number of both "likely irregular migrants" and "likely refugees." Thus, we find that IPs to EURAs may generate a deterrent effect to both categories of migrants. Interestingly, and contrary to our

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expectations, the coefficient for IPs to EURAs is not significantly larger for “likely irregular migrants” than for “likely refugees.” The fact that we find evidence for a deterrent effect for likely refugees is troubling. This potential effect runs counter to European commitments to protect individuals fleeing persecution.

It is also important to note that the coefficients on our control variables are in line with our expectations. Thus, growing levels of violence in countries of origin and population growth are both positively and significantly associated with the number of IBCs. In contrast, democratic governance and visa liberalization is negatively and significantly associated with the number of IBCs. The coefficients for GDP per capita and ODA are not significant. In the case of GDP per capita, it is likely that the relationship between wealth and irregular migration is curvilinear. In a similar vein, we do not find a significant relationship between IBCs and ODA. As our measure may be a coarse measure of assistance to developing countries, moving forward we will aim to provide a more refined measure of ODA which is specifically geared towards stemming migration and which will replace the measure of general foreign aid we deploy at present. In almost all cases the signs and values of the coefficients for our controls do not substantially vary across models, even as we change our measure of the dependent variable. The sole exceptions are the coefficients for GDP per capita, which become weakly significant and positive when the dependent variable constitutes the number of “likely irregular migrants”.

Table 7 delineates the results for the second set of models that we develop. In this Table, the dependent variable is always the natural log of the total number of IBCs detected by nationality and route over time. In the first model, we add the weighted European average asylum rejection rate as a control variable and enter bilateral readmission agreements and IPs to EURAs separately. In the second model, we include an interaction term between the rejection rate and the number of IPs to EURAs. In the third model we include an interaction term between the rejection rate and the number of purely

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bilateral readmission agreements. Finally, in the fourth model, we include both interaction terms.

As we anticipated, the coefficient for the asylum rejection rate is negative and significant across our models. Unsurprisingly, higher rejection rates are associated with fewer relative IBCs. Individuals who know that they will likely be unable to obtain asylum in Europe are less inclined to attempt to migrate to Europe irregularly. Additionally, the coefficients for our interaction terms are not significant in any of our models. This reaffirms our results in Table 6, as it indicates that the degree to which asylum applications are rejected does not influence the (deterrence) effect that bilateral readmission agreements or IPs to EURAs may have on IBCs. As with our initial model, IPs to EURAs have a negative correlation with both “likely irregular migrants” and “likely refugees” of the same magnitude. Asylum rejection (or acceptance) rates do not shape the effects of policy - all categories of IBCs are discouraged from entering Europe. The results for our control variables are not different from our initial results presented in Table 6. In sum, our results reaffirm potential concern regarding the deterrent effect of externalization policies on asylum seekers.

Altogether, our statistical analyses offer an initial rigorous assessment of the relationship between the most prominent type of externalization instrument - readmission agreements - and irregular migration to Europe. We find that IPs to EURAs are significantly negatively associated with the number of IBCs, whether we look at IBCs in the aggregate, or as “likely irregular migrants” and “likely refugees.” Ultimately, the deterrence effect that IPs to EURAs may have is likely tied to broader commitments on the part of partner states to stop irregular emigration. Nevertheless, this raises the concern that individuals with a legitimate claim to asylum in Europe are being stopped from finding safety from persecution.

### 6. Conclusion

This report represents the first deliverable within Work Package 8.1 of the EU Horizon 2020 funded Migration Governance and Asylum Crises (MAGYC) project. As such, it presents an initial assessment of the impact of externalization policies on flows of irregular migrants into Europe in the period 2009-2018. The report first introduces a new database of externalization policy instruments, which fills a gap in existing migration policy datasets. This database will be expanded in the next stages of the project to include a broader range of externalization policy instruments and thus refine the preliminary analysis of the impact of externalization on flows that we conducted in this report. In turn, we provide an innovative analysis of the composition and direction of irregular migration flows to Europe. In particular, we estimate the number of “irregular border crossers” into Europe who could be considered as “likely refugees” and “likely irregular migrants.” This builds on a critical understanding of the normative dimensions of statistical categories, and reveals that individuals who would likely obtain refugee status in Europe represent over half of all irregular border crossers from 2009-2020. By doing so, it points at the policy incoherence of externalization, which appears in direct tension with the commitments European states have made under international law to protect persecuted individuals. Furthermore, a closer examination of the dispersion of migrants across the main Mediterranean migration routes reveals that the presence of nationals of a single state across multiple routes is a marginal phenomenon, which further highlights the extent to which the closure of migration routes could directly impact “likely refugees” and their ability to be granted international protection.

To assess such observations and to evaluate the impact of externalization on migration flows, we examine the development of European cooperative externalization instruments with third countries over time. Our results highlight the main trends in externalization dynamics and the impacts of the 2015 crisis. The number and types of externalization policy instruments grew incrementally through the 2000s, expanding geographically, across levels of

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cooperation (bilateral, multilateral) and in types of instruments. The crisis appears to have impacted policy dynamics in three ways: (1) stymied the expansion of formal readmission agreements, notably EURAs, (2) fostered the development of informal measures and instruments, and (3) reinforced the geographical expansion of externalization policies.

Ultimately, we conduct a panel regression analysis to assess the impacts of readmission agreements and irregular border crossings. This analysis represents a first step toward the construction of a model that would include a greater variety of policy instruments and complementary migration statistics. Our results show that bilateral readmission agreements, which are the most common externalization instruments adopted by European governments, do not deter individuals from attempting to migrate to Europe irregularly. However, when looking at IPs to EURAs, we find a negative association between the number of protocols adopted by an origin country and the number of IBCs, which we suggest can be explained by the limited number of irregular border crossers from countries that have signed these agreements as well as the pre-existing political relations between these countries and the EU.

Looking forward, we plan to further expand our model to encompass different instruments beyond readmission agreements and to assess the impact of externalization on migrants in transit, as opposed to simply the nationals of the state entering into (an) agreement(s). We also aim to better explore the extent to which externalization engendered rerouting (or not), with the aim to provide a more nuanced and complete picture of the impacts of various instruments of externalization on migrant flows to Europe.

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