

# **RESPOND: Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond**

## **An EU Horizon 2020 Research Project**

**(2017–2020)**

With the goal of enhancing the governance capacity and policy coherence of the EU, its member states and neighbours, RESPOND is a comprehensive study of responses to the 2015 Refugee Crisis. Representing one of the biggest challenges that the EU has faced since its establishment, this crisis foregrounded the vulnerability of European borders, the tenuous jurisdiction of the Schengen system and broad problems with the governance of migration and integration.

One of the most visible impacts of the refugee crisis is the polarization of politics in EU Member States and intra-Member State policy (in) coherence in responding to the crisis. Incoherence stems from diverse constitutional structures, legal provisions, economic conditions, public policies and cultural norms, and more research is needed to determine how to mitigate conflicting needs and goals. In this context, RESPOND brings together 14 partners to:

- provide an in-depth understanding of the governance of recent mass migration at macro, meso and micro levels through cross-country comparative research;
- Critically analyse governance practices with the aim of enhancing the migration governance capacity and policy coherence of the EU, its member states and third countries.

The project studies migration governance along five thematic fields: (1) Border management and security, (2) Refugee protection regimes, (3) Reception policies, (4) Integration policies, and (5) Conflicting Europeanization. These fields literally represent refugees' journeys across borders, from their confrontations with protection policies, to their travels through reception centres, and in some cases, ending in their integration into new homes. These fields also represent the governance context, including security and legal regimes, national and local policies and finally overarching conflictual discourses about Europeanization in the context of migration. To explore all of these dimensions, RESPOND employs a truly interdisciplinary approach, using legal and policy analysis, comparative historical analysis, political claims analysis, socio-economic and cultural analysis, longitudinal survey analysis, interview based analysis, and photovoice techniques.

### **Innovative Research Design: Multi-Level Research**

A foundational premise of our research is that migration governance now operates beyond macro level actors, such as states or the EU. Migration management engages meso and micro level actors as well. Local governments, NGOs, associations and refugees are not simply the passive recipients of policies, but are also shaping policies from the ground-up. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the web of macro, meso and micro level responses to mass migration. We are particularly interested in how interactions among actors at different levels—among policy makers and implementers, policy receivers, and “sending and receiving” networks—lead to policy incoherence in some situations while filling policy gaps in others. Bringing forth the co-constitutive

relations and interactions between these three levels, enables us to overcome the pitfalls of linear understandings of policy making and implementation processes. We expect this approach will also shed light on policy solutions.

### **Innovative Approach: Learning from Refugees**

Too often refugees are included in migration research as statistical figures, passive recipients of policies or representatives of broad movement patterns. RESPOND defines a new subject position for refugees, as people who have been forced to find creative solutions to life threatening situations and as people who can generate new forms of knowledge and information as a result. Rather than mere passers-by or victims of circumstances, refugees can be seen as creating and using networks, constructing spaces for their own possibilities, cultivating solutions, and articulating relationships between disparate cultures by translating between them. Most importantly, they become carriers of cultural knowledge in and through their personal experiences. By focusing on the perceptions of refugees about border, asylum, reception and integration policies we believe that refugees teach us a great deal about their lives while also providing critical insights about policy incoherence and strategies for improving governance.

### **The Eastern Mediterranean Route**

RESPOND's focus will be on the Eastern Mediterranean route, especially the mass migration triggered by the Syrian Civil War from 2011 onward. The countries included in the project and the target refugee populations have been selected accordingly. Our selection is also guided by the significance of the chosen countries as source, transit, and destination countries. The source countries we study are Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The transit countries we study are Turkey, Lebanon, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Hungary. And the destination countries we study are Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Austria. Although the main focus of this project will be on the Eastern Mediterranean Route, in order to deepen our comparative understanding the project will also look at the Western and Central Mediterranean Routes through macro level analysis of the Sub-Saharan Region countries, in particular Morocco and Libya, as well as the North- Eastern borders of the EU through Ukrainian migration to Poland. All of these routes and relevant third countries are important for the governance of migration and EU external policy.

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