Elektronik Siyaset Bilimi Araştırmaları Dergisi
Die Elektronische Zeitschrift für politikwissenschaftliche Studien
Electronic Journal of Political Science Studies

Haziran 2025 Cilt: 16 Sayı:2
Juni 2025 Vol: 16 Num:2
June 2025 Vol: 16 No:2

The Changing Refugee Policies of the European Union

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Abstract

The present article undertakes a critical examination of the refugee policies of the European Union (EU). The objective of the present study is threefold: firstly, to analyse the shifts in the EU's refugee policies over time; secondly, to assess their effectiveness; and thirdly, to investigate the inherent conflicts of interest among member states. The discussion encompasses pivotal inquiries concerning the efficacy of prevailing policies in addressing contemporary challenges and the primary beneficiaries of these policies. In this particular context, the article under scrutiny highlights the Pact on Migration and Asylum, a pivotal instrument designed to enhance the equitable and effective management of EU refugee policies. This underscores the persistent divergences of opinion among member states and the practical challenges encountered in its implementation. While the new policies aspire to achieve a more equitable distribution of asylum seekers across EU countries, the transition from theory to practice has revealed significant disagreements among member states regarding which policies to implement, particularly stemming from their differing national interests. Significant differences of opinion have been expressed with regard to the establishment of a common asylum procedure for application processes and the reinforcement of border security measures. In order to conceptualise these differences, the study primarily draws upon securitization theory and burden-sharing theories. Consequently, the capacity of EU policies to resolve migration crises has been limited, largely because member states have consistently prioritised their own national agendas. The present study employs a qualitative research methodology, with data primarily sourced from official EU documents, legal texts, and international media outlets. The examination of these data was facilitated by content analysis.

Keywords: European Union, Refugee Policies, Migration and Asylum Pact, Irregular Migrants

Avrupa Birliğinin Değişen Mülteci Politikaları

Özet

Bu makale, Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) mülteci politikalarını ele almaktadır. Bu çalışma, AB'nin mülteci politikalarında yıllar içinde meydana gelen değişiklikleri, bu politikaların etkinliğini ve üye ülkeler arasındaki çıkar çatışmalarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada ele alınan sorular arasında, uygulanan politikaların mevcut zorluklar karşısında ne kadar etkili olabilecekleri ve kimin çıkarlarına daha fazla hizmet ettikleri yer almaktadır. Bu bağlamda AB'nin mülteci politikalarını daha adil ve etkili bir şekilde yönetmek amacıyla sunulan Göç ve İltica Paktı, üye ülkeler arasındaki görüş farklılıkları ve uygulamada yaşanan sorunlar vurgulanmaktadır. Yeni politikalarla, sığınmacıların AB ülkeleri arasında daha adil bir şekilde dağıtılmasının sağlanması amaçlanmaktadır. Ancak, teoriden uygulamaya geçiş sürecinde, farklı çıkarlar temelinde hangi politikaların uygulanacağı konusunda üye ülkeler arasında görüş ayrılıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Ülkeler arasında, sığınma başvuru süreçlerinde uygulanacak ortak bir sığınma prosedürünün oluşturulması ve sınırlarda güvenlik önlemlerinin güçlendirilmesi gibi konularda ciddi görüş ayrılıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu farklılıkları kavramsallaştırmak amacıyla çalışma, güvenlikleştirme teorisi ve yük paylaşımı teorileri merkeze alınmak suretiyle çözümlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, üye devletler kendi ulusal politikalarına öncelik verdiklerinden AB politikaları göç krizlerini çözmede sınırlı kalmışlardır. Nitel bir yöntem kullanılan

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çalışmaya veri sağlayan kaynaklar arasında bilhassa AB'nin resmi belgeleri, yasal metinler ve uluslararası basın yayın organları yer almışlardır. Makalede içerik analizi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Mülteci Politikaları, Göç ve İltica Paktı, Düzensiz Göçmenler

Introduction

While migration movements in European history have been driven by the search for religious and political freedom, they have mainly involved displacement for ethnic reasons since the Second World War. At the same time, labor migration and migration from colonies have influenced Europe demographically and culturally, forming the basis for the European Union's (EU) migration policies. In particular, the civil wars and conflicts that began in Iran and Afghanistan in 1979 and continued in Iraq and Syria after the 2000s caused large numbers of people to flee their countries and migrate to EU countries. Political and social unrest in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt also increased the flow of refugees toward the EU. Political instability in the region and poverty in various African countries have also led to large waves of migration. Many of these migrants have attempted to reach Europe via Turkey, Greece, and Italy. As a result, they have faced numerous challenges, including the risk of drowning at sea, human trafficking, and exposure to conditions that violate human rights. In this context, the EU has taken steps to update its refugee policies by increasing regional and international cooperation as a solution to the refugee crisis. [1]

In 2020, the EU made significant changes to its migration and asylum policies in the Pact on Migration and Asylum, aiming to manage migration movements that often cause crises more effectively and to share the burden of migration more fairly among EU member states. Germany stands out among EU countries affected by the influx of refugees. In this context, Germany is discussing regulations with the federal and state governments to reduce the number of asylum seekers in the country and in the EU. France, which ranks second in terms of asylum applications, followed by Spain, Austria, and Italy, continues to seek solutions as the EU countries most affected by asylum seekers. At this point, the EU held a summit in September 2020 with the aim of making fundamental changes to its refugee policy. The European Commission presented a more comprehensive package of proposals to replace the traditional Dublin Agreement. The aim of the summit was to transform existing policies in the field of asylum and migration into a more stable and common refugee policy. However, despite all the rhetoric about a common refugee policy, it is argued that the EU is pursuing a security-oriented and divisive policy in practice and is moving away from human rights-based approaches. In this context, the main argument of this study is that the EU's migration and refugee policies are shaped by national political interests rather than the ideal of integration and therefore remain structurally fragmented and ineffective. [2] [3]

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two main theories to analyze the transformation of EU refugee policies. In this context, securitization theory and burden-sharing theories provide an analytical framework for analyzing EU-level discourse and differences in member state practices. Securitization theory views migration as a security threat by political elites, and

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[1] Somuncu, Başak, Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne Tam Üyelik Sürecinde Uluslararası Göç Politikası, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2006, pp. 45-75.

[2] Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/, (08.02.2024).

[3] European Commision, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/eurodac_en, (20.02.2024).

the media portrays it as an existential threat that demands immediate intervention. In this context, it emphasizes the need to legitimize extraordinary policies. Extraordinary measures such as deportation and compulsory detention in camps are mentioned.[4] Within this framework, migration is seen more as a threat to border security, social order, and national identity.

Burden-sharing theories analyze the fair distribution of the economic, political, and social burdens of refugee crises and the reluctance of states in this context. However, in practice, states are reluctant to accept refugees. In this case, there is a tendency to leave the refugee burden in border countries as much as possible, with national interests prevailing.[5]

Method

In this study, the document analysis method was used based on a qualitative research design. Document analysis is a qualitative data collection and analysis technique that aims to systematically examine and interpret existing written documents. Within the scope of the research, policy reports and texts guiding the European Union's (EU) refugee policies, documents published by the EU Commission and Council, and statements by international organizations were examined. Three criteria were considered in the selection of documents. These are representativeness (documents related to critical events and crisis periods), recency, and reliability (official and academic sources).[6] Thus, the transformation of EU refugee policies, the impact of member states' differing interests on the implementability of policies, and the incompatibility of EU refugee policies with the ideal of integration have been examined.

Regulations Guiding the Refugee Policies of the European Union

In the years following the Geneva Convention adopted by the United Nations in 1951 after the Second World War, many Community countries received labor force from third countries. Especially with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EU was faced with an influx of refugees, first from Central and Eastern Europe, then from Africa and Asia. Not only national regulations, but also various international agreements and decisions adopted by the EU itself have shaped the Community's migration and refugee policies. In the following, the Geneva Convention and the Dublin Convention will be mentioned and a solution to the growing problem of asylum seekers has been sought at the community level with the help of FRONTEX, responsible for border security, and EURODAC, dealing with asylum applications.

Geneva Convention

The Geneva Convention was signed in 1951 in the aftermath of World War II, with the massive refugee crisis in Europe. During this period, many European countries experienced a massive influx of millions of refugees who were forced to migrate due to the devastating effects of war, such as the loss of protection of their countries of origin as a result of regime change or border changes. After the war, millions of people in Europe and around the world were forced to flee their homes. The post-war displacement and chaos caused

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[4] Buzan, Barry, Wæver, Ole and De Wilde, Jaap, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, pp. 22-49.

[5] Thielemann, Eiko R., Between Interests and Norms: Explaining Burden-Sharing in the European Union, Journal of Refugee Studies, Vol 16, No. 3, 2003, pp. 261-270.

[6] Sak, Ramazan, Sak, İkbal Tuba Şahin, Şendil, Çağla Öneren ve Nas, Eşref, Bir Araştırma Yöntemi Olarak Doküman Analizi, Kocaeli Üniversitesi Eğitim Dergisi, 2021, pp. 227-256.

societies to seek refuge in safer settlements and to need international protection. In this context, the Geneva Convention was established to provide refugees with international protection and to define their rights. The New York Protocol of January 31, 1967, which is seen as a complement to the Geneva Convention of July 28, 1951, determines refugee law internationally. These conventions set out the definitions of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker and determine the rights of individuals with this status. It includes provisions for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, with a particular emphasis on the principle of non-refoulement. EU member states have ratified this convention and adopted the United Nations refugee law. The Community countries have thus agreed to abide by international law that supersedes national and EU law. However, the Community countries have not been very successful in complying with the obligation to act jointly within the framework of this international refugee law. With the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam, Schengen EU law became a tool to abolish border controls between member states, emphasizing EU citizenship. In addition, with the aim of establishing a Common European Asylum System, the EU seems to be aiming for a common approach in refugee policies.[7] [8] [9] [10] However, due to events that occurred prior to the 1951 Geneva Convention, it was limited to persons who were refugees in Europe. This limitation caused refugee law to remain limited in terms of time and geography. The 1967 New York Protocol, however, removed these restrictions, paving the way for the global and timeless application of the convention. In this regard, the New York Protocol has made refugee law more effective by establishing a universal framework.[11]

Today's EU refugee policies are based on the principles and provisions of the Geneva Convention, an international legal instrument. EU Member States rely on the Geneva Convention to assist refugees and asylum seekers in providing international protection, humanitarian assistance and integration. However, with the increase in refugee flows and migrant crises in recent years, the EU's refugee policies have faced various challenges and have been criticized. This has led to challenges in protecting refugees and guaranteeing their rights.[12] [13] [14]

Dublin Convention

The Dublin Convention was signed by EU member states on June 15, 1990. However, it entered into force only in 1997. With this convention, EU countries established a common mechanism for the examination of asylum applications and the evaluation of refugees within the framework of certain criteria and mechanisms. In March 2003, the Convention was renamed Dublin II and the rule that asylum applications can only be examined by a single EU member state was adopted. The aim of this amendment was to

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[7] Keles, Janroj Yilmaz, Avrupa Ülkelerinin Mülteci ve İltica Politikaları, Politik Art, 2014, pp. 2-5.

[8] Joly, Danièle, Haven or Hell?: Asylum Policies and Refugees in Europe Springer, 2016, pp. 3-17.

[9] Hopyar, Zehra, Avrupa'nın Mülteci Politikası, Uluslararası Politik Araştırmalar Dergisi, Vol 2, No. 3, 2016, pp. 60-65.

[10] Aktaş, Murat ve Öztekin, Sıddıka, Avrupa Birliği'nin Göç Politikaları, Irregular Migration towards EU and Balkan Countries, Sarajevo: Sedef Bosnia doo, 2017, pp. 208-214.

[11] UNHCR, The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Its 1967 Protocol, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, https://www.unhcr.org/, (10.05.2025).

[12] Özcan, Mehmet, Avrupa Birliği Sığınma Hukuku: Ortak Bir Sığınma Hukukunun Ortaya Çıkışı. USAK Books, 2005, pp. 16-28.

[13] Canpolat, Hasan ve Arıner, Hakkı Onur, Küresel Göç ve Avrupa Birliği ile Türkiye'nin Göç Politikalarının Gelişimi, Orsam Rapor, No. 123, 2012, pp. 5-22.

[14] Duruel, Mehmet, Avrupa Birliği Göç Politikası ve Kitlesel Göç Akınları Karşısındaki Durumu, Uluslararası Politik Araştırmalar Dergisi, Vol 3, No. 3, 2017, pp. 5-9.

prevent asylum seekers from applying for asylum in another EU member state after being rejected. In addition, the possibility of applying for asylum in more than one EU member state at the same time is also prevented. However, these regulations have led to some unforeseen consequences. With these changes, the migration burden on EU border countries has increased. In June 2013, Dublin II was replaced by the Dublin III Agreement. EU member states continued the Fortress Europe policy and increased policies that make it more difficult for refugees to enter Europe. [15]

With Dublin III, migrants have lost the possibility to decide on their own which EU member state to choose for their asylum application. In addition, the allocation of responsibilities is generally achieved through police detentions and deportations. Under the Dublin III regulation, asylum seekers affected by the deportations of migrants are often not included in the Dublin negotiations, while criticism that refugees' interests are not taken into account is growing. Therefore, many asylum seekers try to avoid the implementation part of the Dublin III Regulation. This is a major challenge in efforts to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and to create a fair asylum system.[16]

European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX)

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) is an organization that ensures the management and security of the external borders of the European Union countries. It provides security support to EU member states, including Schengen-connected countries, in the fight against cross-border crime. FRONTEX acts as the central point for coordinating border controls at the external borders of EU member states. In this context, it also cooperates and shares expertise with all EU member states and non-EU neighboring countries affected by cross-border crime. As the EU's first uniformed law enforcement agency, FRONTEX has many officers involved in operations at the European Union's external borders and beyond. These officers are at the forefront of many security issues, such as border surveillance, combating cross-border crime and repatriation operations. At the same time, FRONTEX also cooperates with national authorities, helping to protect the EU's free movement area, such as the Schengen Area.[17] The main tasks of FRONTEX can be summarized as follows;

- Border Management and Surveillance: FRONTEX contributes to the management of the EU's external borders. It covers issues such as border security, migration management and irregular migration. FRONTEX patrols the border areas of EU Member States and protects border security.
- Operations and Missions: FRONTEX organizes and coordinates various operations for border security. These operations cover human trafficking, drug trafficking and various other cross-border crimes taking place at the external borders of EU states.
- Technical Assistance and Capacity Building: FRONTEX provides technical assistance to EU Member States. This includes training, equipment, data sharing and capacity building on border security.

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[15] Radjenovic, Anja, Reform of the Dublin System, European Parliamentary Research Service, Member's Research Service, Vol 1, 2019.

[16] Lorenz, David, Von Dublin-Domino bis Kirchenasyl. Kämpfe um Dublin III, Movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies, Vol 1, No. 1, 2015, pp. 7-12.

[17] European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), 2024, https://www.frontex.europa.eu/, (19.01.2025).

- Intelligence and Information Exchange: FRONTEX collects and shares intelligence. This aims to increase the flow of information between EU member states.
- Emergency Response: FRONTEX provides rapid responses to emergencies and crises that occur. These can be natural disasters, large waves of migration or other extraordinary situations.

European Automated Fingerprint Identification System (EURODAC)

Established in 2000, EURODAC is a database that aims to identify third-country nationals who are applying for asylum in the EU or illegally entering the EU by recording their fingerprints. It assists in the control and assessment of asylum applications to the EU. It is also a critical tool for the effective implementation of the Dublin Convention. EURODAC has been available for use by EU Member States since January 15, 2003. EURODAC is used by 31 countries. 27 EU member states plus Iceland, Switzerland, Norway and Liechtenstein. National asylum authorities register the fingerprints of newly arriving refugees and use existing records in the database. In addition, law enforcement agencies have access to the EURODAC system under strict rules to prevent terrorism and serious crimes and to ensure security. Thus, EURODAC contributes to the effective realization of Europe's asylum and migration policies, helping to ensure security.[18] [19] [20] [21]

For example, in Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Spain or Italy, fingerprints are taken of migrants apprehended by the police. This information is registered in a central database, the EURODAC system. EURODAC does not apply to persons under the age of fourteen, although there is an age limit of fourteen. The fingerprints of asylum applicants are registered in the EURODAC system for ten years. Fingerprints of foreign nationals caught by the police trying to cross EU external borders without the necessary documents are kept for two years. This practice is based on the aim of ensuring the border security of EU Member States and monitoring migration flows.[22]

Historical Development of Migration Movements in Europe

Since the 1800s, millions of people have migrated from Europe to North and South America. In the 20th century, 60 million Europeans migrated to the New World in search of religious and political freedom.[23] [24] Before, during and after World War II, millions of people moved between countries for ethnic reasons. In the aftermath of World War II, large numbers of guest workers were brought from Spain, Türkiye, Italy, Yugoslavia, Portugal and North Africa as Western European countries experienced rapid economic growth (to meet the demand in the labor markets). In the aftermath of the economic crisis that began in 1973,

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[18] Brouwer, Evelien Renate, Eurodac: Its Limitations and Temptations. European Journal of Migration and Law, 2002, p. 231.

[19] Schuster, Liza, Dublin II and Eurodac: Examining the (Un)Intended (?) Consequences, Gender, Place & Culture, Vol 18, No. 3, 2011, pp. 405-412.

[20] Kuster, Brigitta and Tsianos, Vassilis S., How to Liquefy a Body on the Move: Eurodac and the Making of the European Digital Border, EU Borders and Shifting Internal Security: Technology, Externalization and Accountability, 2016, pp. 49-58.

[21] European Commision, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/eurodac_en, (20.02.2024).

[22] Schuster, a.g.e., pp. 406-411.

[23] Martin, Philip and Widgren, Jonas, International Migration: Facing the Challenge, Population Bulletin, Vol 57, No. 1, 2003, pp. 7-21.

[24] Gençler, Ayhan, Asymmetrical Development of Labor in the Globalized World and European Approach, International Scientific Conference Unitech 03, Vol II, Gabrovo 2003, pp. 73-75.

Western European governments introduced policies to encourage repatriation and limit the number of immigrants. However, this was not successful and migrants preferred not to return to their home countries, taking advantage of their social rights. Countries such as the UK and France received immigration from their former colonies, but also from other countries in Africa and Asia. In addition, countries such as the Soviet Union, Central and Eastern European countries, Yugoslavia and Iraq have also received large amounts of immigration. In 1989, when Hungary opened its borders, East Germans fled to the West. In the Soviet Union, after freedom of movement was granted, applications for immigration to the USA increased considerably between 1989 and 1990. These migration movements affected cultural interactions, economic changes and social dynamics between countries. In this context, Dublin was introduced in 1990 to regulate refugee and asylum policies and was updated in 1997. Since it was aimed at prevent secondary movements according to the update; it has created a burden for the countries (eastern and southern European countries) where refugees first set foot.[25] [26] [27] [28]

Between 1983 and 2000, the number of foreigners applying for asylum in Europe was recorded as 5.7 million. The peak years were 1989 and 1993, when the number of asylum applications reached its highest level. Half of these applications were made to Germany. However, as a result of the measures taken since 1994, there has been a significant decline in asylum applications to Germany.[29] After 2000, migration from Africa and Asia, especially from Eastern Europe, increased significantly. With this increase, the European Union felt the need to change its migration policies and discussions on the effectiveness of Dublin implementation started.[30] In 2000, the German government amended the employment ban for asylum seekers. With the employment ban changed from indefinite to 12 months, asylum seekers had to wait before entering the labor market.[31]

On February 24, 2022, 4.31 million non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine following the Russian invasion received temporary protection status in the EU. The EU countries that received the most migrants from Ukraine were Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic. On September 28, 2023, the European Council extended temporary protection for citizens fleeing the Russian aggression against Ukraine until March 4, 2025.[32] [33]

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[25] Paludan, Anne, Refugees in Europe, International Migration Review, Vol 15, No. 1-2, 1981, pp. 69-71.
[26] Garson, Jean Pierre and Loizillon, Anais, Changes and Challenges Europe and Migration from 1950 to Present, The Economic and Social Aspects of Migration, Conference Jointly Organised by The European Commision and the OECD, 21-22 January 2003, Brussels, pp. 5-19.
[27] Hahn, Dieter, Migration within and Towards Europe: A Challenge For Policy Makers in The 90's, Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford, Queen Elizabeth House, 1991, pp. 5-22.
[28] Güleç, Cansu, Avrupa Birliği'nin Göç Politikaları ve Türkiye'ye Yansımaları, TESAM Akademi Dergisi, Vol 2, No. 2, 2015, pp. 90-99.
[29] Martin, Philip ve Widgren, Jonas, a.g.e., pp. 15-33.
[30] Saver, Jan, EU Labour Migration Policies, EU-OECD Dialogue, 2014.
[31] Marbach, Moritz, Hainmueller, Jens and Hangartner, Dominik, The Long-Term Impact of Employment Bans on the Economic Integration of Refugees, Science Advances, Vol 4, No. 9, 2018.
[32] UNHCR, https://www.unhcr.org/, (10.02.2024).
[33] European Community Statistical Office, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat, (14.01.2024).

Table 1: Illegal Border-Crossing between Bcps, on Entry

	2019	2020	2021	2022	Share of total	% change on prev. year
All Borders						
Syria	24 339	21 631	46 395	98 360	30	112
Afghanistan	34 154	10 140	16 711	36 031	11	116
Tunisia	2 799	13 185	16 527	25 260	7.6	53
Egypt	996	1 519	9 218	21 966	6.6	138
Bangladesh	2 254	5 426	9 041	17 535	5.3	94
Morocco	8 020	17 594	16 482	14 764	4.5	-10
Pakistan	3 799	2 603	3 863	12 764	3.8	230
Türkiye	7 880	3 947	4 673	12 087	3.6	159
Algeria	5 314	12 987	13 702	9 421	2.8	-31
Côte d'Ivoire	1 500	2 337	4 117	7 178	2.2	74
All Other	50 791	35 054	59 372	76 187	23	28
Total all borders	**141 846**	**126 423**	**200 101**	**331 553**	**100**	**66**

Reference: FRONTEX Risk Analysis for 2023/2024, www.frontex.europa.eu, (19.01.2025).

According to the table above, the highest number of illegal entries into the EU is from Syria. This is followed by Afghanistan and Tunisia. The civil unrest, terrorist attacks and political instability in Afghanistan have led to a major refugee crisis. This crisis has led to an exodus of individuals from Afghanistan towards Europe. The US and the Taliban reached an agreement in February 2020. This agreement initiated the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. As part of the agreement, US and NATO troops also started to withdraw from Afghanistan. This move led to a new influx of refugees from Afghanistan towards Europe. Due to the protracted civil wars and conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan, the living conditions of individuals have become difficult and many have been forced to flee their countries. Due to human rights violations and repression in these countries, people are turning to EU countries in search of a safer and freer region. The influx of refugees from Tunisia and Egypt is due to a complex situation caused by political and social turmoil in the region. Regime changes and political instability in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, especially after the Arab Spring protests in 2011, have triggered large-scale refugee movements. As a result, there have been many refugees trying to enter various European countries from countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, especially from the Libyan border. The EU has responded to these refugee crises in various ways. First, it focused on updating refugee and asylum policies and providing support to refugees. Subsequently, the EU's border security policies have often been criticized. The difficulties and human rights violations faced by refugees arriving in EU countries via the Mediterranean have caused great distress. The EU has developed policies to increase cooperation with countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, where many refugees arrive. However, this crisis requires not only EU policies but also regional and international efforts.

In 2015, the EU witnessed an influx of refugees, mostly Syrians and Iraqis. Refugees crossing Türkiye's Aegean and Western Balkan routes to the borders of Greece and Bulgaria have made their way to the EU borders.[34]

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[34] Nas, Çiğdem, Türkiye-AB İlişkilerinde Geri Kabul ve Vize Serbestliği: Hareketliliğin Yönetimi, Marmara Üniversitesi Avrupa Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi, Vol 23, No. 2, 2015, pp. 170-182.

With the refugee crises within Türkiye's borders, especially after the Syrian civil war, the EU signed the Readmission Agreement with Türkiye on December 16, 2013. This agreement has led to major disagreements between the European Union (EU) and Türkiye in the context of migration. After the Turkish Grand National Assembly ratified the agreement on October 1, 2014, it entered into force. However, its implementation was postponed until October 2016. The agreement aims to return irregular migrants travelling to EU countries to their countries of origin. In this context, Türkiye acts as a transit country due to its geographical location. Upon the EU's demands in the agreement, Türkiye conveyed its expectations to the EU on visa exemption, financial aid and acceleration of the EU membership process. If the agreement is analyzed from Türkiye 's perspective.[35][36]

- Türkiye has concerns about the agreement. The financial support to be given to Türkiye by the EU will not be sufficient for the refugees. There are concerns that the irregular migrants to be brought to Türkiye will not be easy to send back to their countries and will cause problems in the country's economy.
- Another concern is the expectation that Türkiye will strain the country's capacity with all the irregular migrants to be returned by the EU. The concern was expressed that this would lead to problems between the local population and irregular migrants.
- The burden of irregular migrants requires strong administrative management and technical capacity.
- Turkish citizens were promised visa exemption under the agreement. However, judging from recent developments, the EU has not kept its promise.
- Türkiye's EU membership process has encountered various difficulties and this situation is still ongoing.

If we analyze the Readmission Agreement from the EU's perspective;

- The Community has concerns about Türkiye's adherence to the agreement and its acceptance of migrants.
- Another area of concern is the trust problem caused by political instability in Türkiye. Due to its geographical location, Türkiye is also important for border security for the EU. In this context, there is a concern whether Türkiye will fulfill its commitments on irregular migrants.

As can be seen, the Readmission Agreement brings advantages and challenges for both sides. International cooperation is essential for the effective management of irregular migration crises. However, the human rights and international law dimension should not be forgotten during implementation. To summarize, due to economic difficulties, political impotence and internal unrest in many of the countries mentioned in the table, their citizens are flocking to the EU in the hope of a better future. Germany in particular stands out among EU member states in terms of the number of asylum applications.[37][38][39][40]

The graph below shows the EU countries that receive the most migration:

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[35] Nas, a.g.m., s. 172-181.

[36] Güder, Mustafa, Türkiye'deki Dış Göç Olgusuna Sosyoekonomik Bir Yaklaşım ve Avrupa Birliği ile Geri Kabul Anlaşması'nın Olası Etkileri, Sosyoekonomi, Vol 24, No. 30, 2016, pp. 132-136.

[37] Nagaş, Erol, Göç Hareketleri Bağlamında Türkiye–Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri, EURO Politika, No. 18, 2023, pp. 52-68.

[38] BBC, AB Ülkeleri Yeni Sığınma ve Göç Politikası Konusunda Anlaştı, 9 Haziran 2023, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cv21dxe000wo, (08.02.2024).

[39] Euronews, https://tr.euronews.com/2022/08/16/5-grafikle-taliban-sonrasi-afganistandan-avrupa-birligine-gocun-seyri, (07.01.2024).

[40] Ürgen, Ekin, 5. Yılında Avrupa Birliği–Türkiye Mutabakatı, https://gocarastirmalaridernegi.org/wp-content/uploads/AB-TR_Mutabakati_eu-son.pdf, (10.02.2025).

Graph 1: Top Five Countries in terms of Asylum Applications per EU Country (2022)

Top Five Countries In Terms of Asylum Applications Per EU Country

■ Germany ■ France ■ Spain ■ Austria ■ Italy

Italy
12%

Austria
15%

Germany
34%
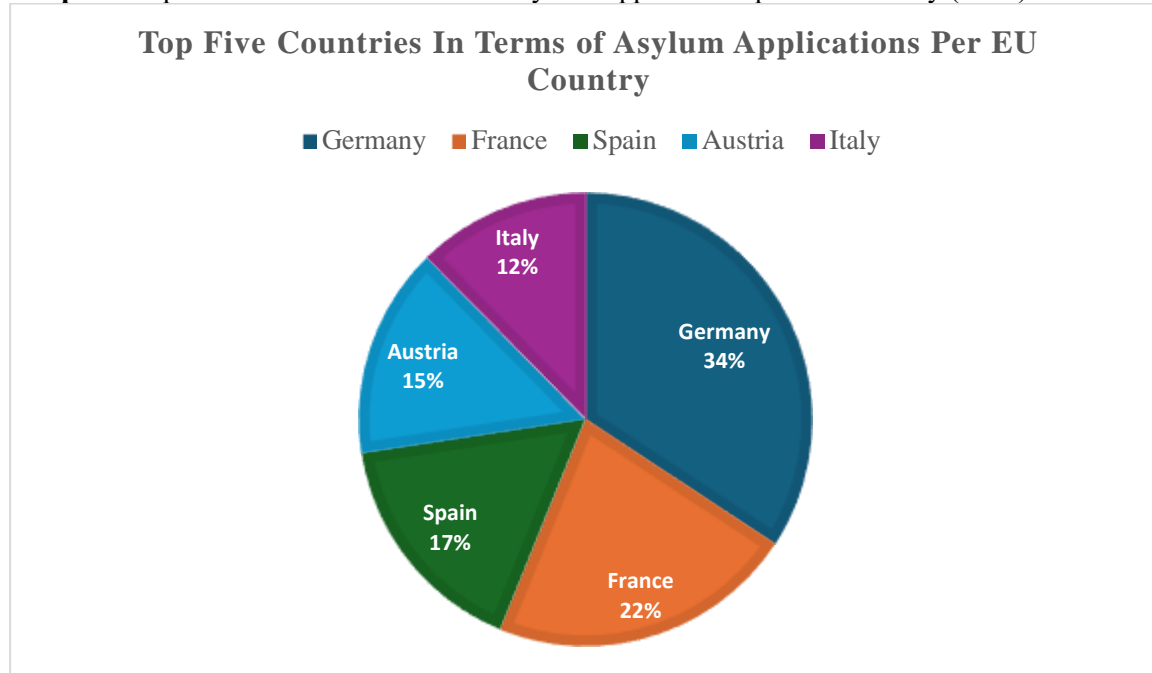
Spain
17%

France
22%

Reference: European Community Statistical Office, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat, (14.01.2024).

As seen in the graph, Germany ranks first among the EU member states receiving the highest number of asylum applications. This is followed by France, Spain, Austria and Italy. Countries with a strong economy, high-quality education system, social benefits, deep-rooted culture and a good geographical location are seen as attractive factors for refugees.

Just as the EU has long tried and continues to try to limit the masses of asylum seekers flooding into many of its member states, various member states are also seeking a solution to this problem through their own regulations. The efforts of Germany, which accepts the highest number of asylum seekers among the community countries, intensified in the early 2020s. Germany, which has a federal structure of government, has made significant progress since 2021 through cross-party initiatives of the state governments and the Federal Government. The Council of State Prime Ministers met with Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz for the fourth time in two years on March 6, 2024, and agreed on important decisions to limit the number of asylum seekers entering the country each year as much as possible.[41] In light of these decisions, the Bundestag of the Länder, which convened on March 22, 2024, with the agenda of the refugee crisis, approved the decisions taken by the Federal Parliament.

As emphasized above, following the recent EU decision on refugees, countries that are particularly affected by the influx of asylum seekers are aiming to reduce the number of asylum seekers through national regulations that go beyond implementing the EU decision in their own countries. With the support and pressure of the federal and state governments and the Christian Democrats, who are in opposition at the federal level, Germany is discussing various measures to reduce the number of refugees entering the country. To this end, according to a resolution that is expected to become law soon, the number of asylum seekers to be admitted to the country would be limited to 60,000 per year, with a maximum

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[41] Pressekonferenz: Das Sagen Scholz und Ministerpräsidenten nach dem Migrationsgipfel, Spiegel, https://www.spiegel.de, (06.03.2024).

of 100,000.[42] However, as this would require a constitutional amendment, other measures are being considered in the short term. The first is to increase the number of safe third countries. In this way, if the countries of origin or transit of asylum seekers arriving in Germany are included in the group of safe third countries, rejected asylum seekers can be sent back to those countries. However, some source countries do not want to take back their own citizens, and some transit countries do not want to take back asylum seekers who have already traveled to Germany. In order to overcome this problem, agreements with both source and transit countries are planned to send back asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected. Talks are ongoing with various countries in the region. Another proposal concerns the outcome of asylum applications. If less than five percent of asylum seekers whose applications are accepted have a nationality below the level of their country of origin, the country of origin should be included as a safe third country. There are also calls for ways to shorten the processing times for asylum applications as much as possible. One of these is the full digitization of the asylum application process and new legal measures to shorten the process, which currently takes 20 months, to 2-3 months. They are also trying to reduce the attractiveness of asylum-seeker status by transferring at least some of the aid to asylum-seekers via shopping cards rather than in cash.[43] On the other hand, asylum seekers whose applications are accepted are expected to be integrated into the labor market as soon as possible and to participate in working life. A debate similar to the one initiated by the UK on sending asylum seekers who entered the country illegally to Rwanda is also being discussed in Germany, as in many other EU countries. The plan is to conclude agreements with countries in the region, such as Albania, Moldova and Georgia, so that refugees seeking asylum in Germany will be held in these countries, apply for asylum there and wait there until the outcome.[44] Negotiations are ongoing with some countries in the region for this. Another issue adopted in France and causing strong reactions in Germany is the discussion of revoking the German citizenship of immigrants with German citizenship if they are convicted of an extreme political crime. This issue, which causes great reactions due to the negative experiences of the Nazi era, is not expected to be accepted in the near future, as it would only be possible through a constitutional amendment. France, which ranks second in terms of the highest number of asylum applications, adopted policies in parliament in 2023 that make France's immigration policy stricter. These policy changes were supported by both President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Renaissance party and Marine Le Pen's far-right Rally National (RN). However, the result of the parliamentary vote caused uproar in Macron's party and the Minister of Health, Aurélien Rousseau, resigned in protest. The new law makes it harder for migrants in France to bring family members into the country and to benefit from social benefits. In addition, children are banned from being placed in detention centers. Marine Le Pen welcomed the changes in immigration policies, calling them an ideological victory for the far right. However, human rights defenders criticized the new reform as the most regressive immigration law in decades.[45]

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[42] Merz will maximal 100.000 Flüchtlinge pro Jahr, Berliner Zeitung, https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/, (16.03.2024).
[43] Migration: Die Bezahlkarte kommt im Bundestag nicht voran – woran habert es?, Stern, www.stern.de, (14.03.2024).
[44] Pressekonferenz: Das Sagen Scholz und Ministerpräsidenten nach dem Migrationsgipfel, Spiegel, https://www.spiegel.de, (06.03.2024).
[45] BBC, French MPs Pass Controversial Immigration Reform, 20 December 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67762119, (06.02.2024).

The arrival of thousands of asylum seekers from Africa to the Italian island of Lampedusa has led to changes in many policies in the field of migration. In this context, Giorgia Meloni, one of Italy's right-wing leaders, announced at a press conference held in Rome together with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama that Italy would establish centers in Albania to accommodate thousands of asylum seekers. He stated that this would apply to migrants rescued by Italian boats and not to illegal migrants reaching Italian shores. It would also not apply to pregnant women, children and vulnerable persons. Rama emphasized that Italy had provided aid to Albanians in the 1990s and that this debt could not be repaid, and said that he would respond positively to Italy's request. Andrea Costa, the president of Baobab Experience, a migrant aid organization, reacted negatively, criticizing Italy's changes in its migration policies. Referring to the British government's attempt to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, Costa said that the centers to be established in Albania run the risk of becoming a kind of Guantanamo, Lampedusa or Rwanda.[46] [47]

If we look at the migration developments in the EU in summary; Guest worker period between 1945-1970 and Family Reunions in 1970-1980s. The dissolution of the Soviet Union between 1990s and 2000s and finally, migration from non-EU countries from the 2000s to the present day constitute the current policies of the Union.[48]

Changing Refugee Policies of the European Union

In September 2020, the European Union (EU) presented a comprehensive package of proposals to update and improve its migration and asylum policies. The package of proposals aimed to more effectively address and manage the migration flows affecting the EU and to ensure fairer burden-sharing among Member States. This package includes a number of important proposals, such as setting common policies to stabilize the EU's asylum and migration policies, ensuring that asylum applications are concluded more quickly by saving time, ensuring a fairer distribution of migrants across EU countries, increasing security measures at borders and ensuring more effective protection. However, the implementation and implementation of this package of proposals has been marked by disagreements and difficulties. The process has been further complicated by diverging interests and differences in policy approaches among Member States, with some countries responding negatively to the proposals and concerns about their feasibility. The following is a timeline of developments in the European Union's migration and refugee policies.[49]

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[46] BBC, Europe Migrant Crisis: Italy to Build Migrant Centres in Albania, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-6733959, (08.02.2024).

[47] France 24, European Union Poised to Agree New Asylum Laws, 29 September 2023, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230929-eu-poised-to-agree-new-rules-for-asylum-seekers-and-migrants, (07.01.2024).

[48] Aykaç, Mustafa ve Yertüm, Umut, Avrupa Birliği Göç Politikalarının Gelişimi: Misafir İşçi Kabulünden Sığınmacı Akınına, In Journal of Social Policy Conferences, No. 70, 2016, pp. 5-17.

[49] Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/, (08.02.2024).

Table 2: Timeline of the European Union's Asylum and Migration Policy Developments

13 July 2016	• European Commission presents proposal for a common EU resettlement framework in the context of asylum policies.
14 December 2020	• The European Commission has submitted legislative proposals for a new agreement on migration and asylum and to reform EU asylum rules.
9 December 2021	• The European Council has adopted the EU asylum agency regulation. • This institution is responsible for system improvement.
22 June 2022	• Council approves Eurodac and screening regulations • With the approval of 21 EU Member States, steps have been taken to strengthen controls.
20 December 2023	• Council and Parliament agree on screening of irregular migrants, asylum procedures as part of the reform of the EU asylum and migration pact.
14 May 2024	• The Council adopted the Pact to ensure language burden sharing between EU Member States on migration and asylum and to manage refugee management in an orderly manner.

Reference: Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/, (08.02.2024).

The Pact on migration and asylum offers a package of proposals that are new compared to previous policies;[50]

- Simplifying and accelerating the asylum procedure
- Establishing a common asylum procedure and promoting flexible solidarity between Member States in this context
- Establishment of a new asylum agency to support EU Member States in dealing with asylum seekers
- Upgrading the fingerprint database for faster and more accurate collection of information on various categories of migrants, thereby controlling secondary movements (Eurodac)
- Identifying new solidarity mechanisms (financial assistance, development of readmission centers, etc.)
- Prevention of abuse and secondary movements (all checks by the State of first entry) The border procedures will be streamlined and, in this context, the return of rejected applicants will be expedited. This will apply to certain categories of asylum seekers. Border procedures will be applied if the applicant poses a security threat or has deliberately provided false information to officials, if the country of origin has a recognition rate of less than 20%. However, unaccompanied minors will be excluded from the border procedure as long as they do not pose a security threat.
- - Persons subject to this procedure are not authorized to enter EU territory during the assessment phase. Priority will be given to unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and families with young children.

The Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR) sets out a common procedure for those seeking international protection in EU states. The Regulation aims to make asylum applications fairer and more efficient and has standards to protect the rights of asylum seekers. The proposed package seeks to reduce the complexity of this process and shorten it. In this context, the establishment of a common asylum procedure aims at a fairer distribution by EU Member States. This makes the process easier for asylum seekers, knowing that they will face the same procedure whichever country they apply to. The Asylum and Migration

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[50] Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/, (08.02.2024).

Regulation Pact replaces the Dublin III Regulation and emphasizes reducing migration pressure and flexible solidarity between EU Member States.[51]

For border procedures, member states will examine a certain number of applications and sufficient capacity will be determined. Sufficient capacity in terms of reception and human resources has been determined to be 30,000. In addition, the Eurodac database used at the borders contains the fingerprints of all irregular migrants and asylum applicants. The aim is to improve the Eurodac application to record more data such as facial images, provide access to law enforcement agencies and prevent unauthorized movements. Among the EU member states at the meetings, Italy asked for privileges to send refugees back to safe third countries. This led to differences of opinion between Germany and Italy. After intense discussions between Italy and Germany, the Italian minister was persuaded by the Netherlands and Denmark. On the other hand, Hungary and Poland voted against the pact. Malta, Slovakia, Lithuania and Bulgaria abstained. The Czech Republic said it wanted to withdraw because of Ukrainian refugees. Although the agreement was not adopted unanimously, a qualified majority is sufficient to implement the new arrangements.[52]

There are various interpretations of the Pact on Migration and Asylum from many authors. One of them emphasizes that the new pact is more about the EU rather than migration and that it trivializes and ignores refugees.[53] Another criticism is that the new pact does not take into account the fundamental rights of third-country nationals, ignoring their 'right of access'. It undermines the values of human rights, one of the fundamental founding values of the EU.[54] From another perspective, the new pact is insufficient for individuals requiring international protection. The new pact has significant shortcomings in the asylum process. In this case, the need for regulations that take into account critical and vulnerable applicants is underlined.[55] Although it is stated that the new pact has benefits for asylum seekers as it will be a faster procedure, it is seen that the implementation has mostly developed according to the interests of EU member states.

Conclusion

In the history of Europe, in addition to migrations due to the search for religious and political freedom, World War II and its aftermath have also led to major displacements for ethnic reasons. The Geneva Convention, which provides an international basis for the acceptance and treatment of refugees by the parties, was signed in 1951 after World War II. The great wave of migration caused by World War II and affecting almost the entire world has also gained importance for Europe. In parallel with the influx of refugees, labor recruitment, which started in the mid-1950s and was accepted by many European countries, started to be replaced by new refugee flows towards the mid-1970s. Refugee policies organized at the national level within the framework of the Geneva Convention started to be included in the ongoing integration process by expanding. The first step in this direction was

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[51] Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/, (08.02.2024).
[52] BBC, AB Ülkeleri Yeni Sığınma ve Göç Politikası Konusunda Anlaştı, 9 June 2023, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cv21dxe000wo, (08.02.2024).
[53] Häkli, Jouni, Kudžmaitė, Gintarė and Kallio, Kirsi Pauliina, Devaluing Personhood: The Framing of Migrants in the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 2024.
[54] Moreno-Lax, Violeta, Crisis as (Asylum) Governance: The Evolving Normalisation of Non-access to Protection in the EU, European Papers – A Journal on Law and Integration, Vol 2024, No. 1, 2024, pp. 182-200.
[55] Hamel, Jakub, The Evolving Nature of the Vulnerability Concept in European Union Asylum Law, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Law, Research Paper No, 2024, pp. 9-19.

taken with the Dublin Convention signed in 1990, giving EU countries, i.e. community organs, the authority to examine and finalize asylum applications from non-EU countries. Dublin II amended the Dublin Convention in 2003, introducing the competence of a single EU country to examine asylum applications in order to prevent refugees from applying for asylum in more than one country. Dublin III, on the other hand, replaced Dublin II in 2013 but increased measures to make it more difficult for refugees to enter Europe.[56]

On the heels of the Dublin II Convention, which aims to ensure that asylum applications are processed and finalized by a single member state, new measures have been taken at the EU's external borders. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) was established to manage and secure the EU's external borders. FRONTEX also combats cross-border crime in EU member states and Schengen countries. Headquartered in Warsaw, Poland, FRONTEX provides border controls in coordination with EU countries and ensures the border security of the Schengen Area in cooperation with member state national authorities. EURODAC, established to ensure the implementation of the Dublin II and Dublin III Conventions, records the fingerprints of asylum seekers applying for asylum in the EU or third-country nationals entering illegally. It is thus a database for identification and contributes to the asylum and refugee policies of EU countries by providing access to law enforcement agencies to prevent serious crimes such as terrorism.[57]

Since the beginning of the 1990s, efforts to Europeanize refugee policies, i.e. to include them in the integration process, have not been successful due to the pressure of the influx of refugees that EU countries have been exposed to. All common measures and regulations could neither prevent some EU countries from acting against EU law by going beyond these common regulations, nor the efforts of member states to find their own solutions to the refugee problem with the policies they developed at the national level. As part of its efforts to find a common solution, in September 2020, the EU amended its migration and asylum policies and presented a comprehensive package of proposals aimed at effectively resolving migration crises and ensuring fairer burden-sharing among EU states. This package includes important proposals such as simplifying the asylum procedure, establishing a common asylum procedure for EU states, establishing a new asylum agency, renewing the fingerprint database, identifying new solidarity mechanisms, preventing abuse and secondary movements, border procedures and adequate capacity. The EU's package of proposals aims to make refugee and asylum policies more stable. However, there have been some disagreements in the implementation process due to the divergence of interests and policies between countries. Differences in interests and policy approaches among member states led some EU member states to vote against these proposals and raised concerns about their feasibility. In particular, tensions arising from differences of opinion between Italy and Germany and the votes of countries such as Hungary and Poland against the Refugee Pact have caused new tensions. The fact that Hungary and Poland wanted to implement their own migration policies according to their own interests, the pressure of the refugee flows coming by sea through the Mediterranean on Italy and Greece, and the fact that Germany is the country that attracts the most refugees among the EU member states, led to the need to manage migration with other policies. At the March 2020 Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, the EU emphasized solidarity with Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and other Member

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[56] Radjenovic, Anja, Reform of the Dublin System, European Parliamentary Research Service, Member's Research Service, Vol 1, 2019.
[57] European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), 2024, https://www.frontex.europa.eu/, (19.01.2025).

States that may be similarly affected in its efforts to manage its external borders more effectively. Likewise, the EU asylum agency, the Council presidency and the European Parliament have emphasized the importance of cooperation between third countries and stated that they want to increase external border controls. In another development, in June 2022, the European Council adopted a 21-state declaration of solidarity, adopting negotiating guidelines on EURODAC and screening arrangements. The aim is to better monitor irregular migration within Europe. As a result of all these efforts, it can be said that in June 2023 the European Council reached a basic agreement on asylum and migration laws.[58] [59] [60]

In conclusion, one of the important reasons for the changes in the EU's refugee and asylum policies is the increase in migrant flows to the EU and the challenges these flows bring. Especially in recent years, political turmoil in the Middle East and Africa, violations of human rights, economic problems and climate change have increased migration to Europe. This has led to the need to restructure and strengthen migration policies in EU member states. However, although many changes have been made in the face of the EU's efforts to update its migration and asylum policies, various difficulties have been encountered in the implementation process. Refugee and asylum policies are an important item on the agenda of EU Member States, but they have become increasingly complex. While some countries are demanding tighter controlled borders and immigration controls, others are adopting a more humanitarian and solidaristic approach. The key components of the Migration and Asylum Pact reveal that the European Union frames refugees as a greater security threat. Based on the documents analyzed, the tightening of border procedures, the increased operational powers of Frontex, regulations providing for the rapid return of rejected applicants, and the expansion of oversight of the EURODAC database are all products of a securitized discourse that views refugees as a potential threat. When viewed through the lens of Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde's theory of securitization, this situation reflects migrants as an extraordinary threat to social order.[61] As a result, it demonstrates that they have been drawn into a security sphere where extraordinary measures are legitimized. The regulations in question reveal that refugees are not structured on the basis of social integration or rights, but rather on control, exclusion, and deterrence. The EU has acted with the goal of protecting its borders rather than on the basis of collective human values.

The unequal distribution of refugees among EU countries and the prioritization of national interests by some countries can be explained by Thielemann's burden-sharing theory. This theory argues that collective responsibility for refugee acceptance has not been established and that policies have been left to voluntary action. Additionally, Hungary and Poland's veto votes, the conflicting interests between Germany and Italy, and the adoption of different refugee policies by EU member states highlight the reluctance toward burden-sharing and the lack of unity.[62]

Due to the different ways in which EU member states are affected by migration and refugee flows, their different levels of economic development and their different experiences in history, the values such as human rights, equality and democracy, which were the mission

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[58] European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), 2024, https://www.frontex.europa.eu/, (19.01.2025).

[59] Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/, (08.02.2024).

[60] European Commision, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/eurodac_en, (20.02.2024).

[61] Buzan, Barry, Wæver, Ole and De Wilde, Jaap, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.

[62] Thielemann, a.g.e., pp. 260-270.

of the founding of the Community of Western European countries, have a separate place in the political and social life of the member states, and the commonization of migration and refugee policies among the member states seems almost impossible. Therefore, it can be expected that this area will remain an area that will lag far behind the European integration process. Instead, member states will prefer to counter the globalized migration flows targeting Europe through more individual and national regulations and practices. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that far-right and populist movements, which have been observed in many member states in recent years, have been increasingly influencing political governments and even gaining power, making the liberal and human rights-oriented migration and refugee policies that the EU has been trying to establish so far almost impossible. The addition of external factors such as climate change and the expected humanitarian movements from African and Middle Eastern countries as a result of this will force EU countries, like many other developed Western countries, to adopt more national solutions. In the process of European integration, migration and asylum policies will remain as an area of divergence in the EU and will continue to be more radical, more restrictive and moving away from the founding mission of the Community with the practices in many member states.

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