



KIOS HOTSPOT, GREECE, AUGUST 2016

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# MIGREUROP BRIEF



KIOS HOTSPOT, GREECE, AUGUST 2016

## MIGREUROP AND ITS MEMBERS HAVE PUBLISHED:

**“With the hotspots, the EU is reinforcing its push-back policy for boat people”**, Mediapart, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2015  
(FR) <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/migreurop/blog/200715/avec-les-hotspots-l-ue-renforce-sa-politique-de-refoulement-des-boat-people>

Karen Akoka, **“Refugee Crisis, or Asylum Policies Crisis ?”**  
*La vie des idées*, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2016  
(FR) <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Crise-des-refugies-ou-des-politiques-d-asile.html>

**“The Turkey-European Union Agreement: externalizing borders to end the right to asylum”**, Press release Migreurop-AEDH, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2016  
<http://www.migreurop.org/article2681.html>

**“EU-Turkey Agreement: the big sham. Mission report on the Greek hotspots of Lesbos and Chios”**, Gisti, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2016  
(FR) [http://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/rapport\\_gisti\\_mission\\_grece\\_2016-07-25.pdf](http://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_gisti_mission_grece_2016-07-25.pdf)

**“The steps in the process of externalising border control to Africa from the Valletta Summit to Today”**, ARCI, June, 2016  
[http://www.integrationarci.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/analysisdoc\\_externalisation\\_ARCI\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.integrationarci.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/analysisdoc_externalisation_ARCI_ENG.pdf)

**Borders of Europe, Keep Out**, mission report by Cimade, APDHA, Arci, Boats4People, GADEM & Migreurop, June 2016  
(FR) [http://www.lacimade.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/La\\_Cimade\\_FrontieresUE\\_pl.pdf](http://www.lacimade.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/La_Cimade_FrontieresUE_pl.pdf)

Claire Rodier (and C. Portevin), **Migrants and refugees: answers for the fence-sitters, the anxious and the reluctant**, La Découverte, 2016.



Migreurop is a network of organisations, activists and researchers in twenty different countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Our goal is to publicize and denounce policies which marginalize, in particular through detention in camps, different forms of deportation, border closures, as well as the externalization of migratory controls carried out by the European Union and its member states. We contribute to defending the fundamental rights of exiles (including the right to “leave any country, including his own”) and to promoting the freedom of movement and settlement.

[www.migreurop.org](http://www.migreurop.org)

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MIGREUROP  
CICP — 21ter rue Voltaire  
75011 Paris

Photos : Sara Prestianni  
Cartography : Olivier Clochard, Louise Tassin  
Dir. of publication : Emmanuel Blanchard

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Hotspots [pp.1-2] are generally presented as a key component of the European Union (EU)’s response to the “migration crisis”, but the meaning of this expression has yet to be defined. For those who support an essentially restrictive European asylum policy, a “crisis” occurs when large numbers of exiles arrive in the EU. If they manage to enter, the Community structure must be reinforced by further restricting entry into countries where they might benefit from the rights safeguarded by the 1951 Geneva Convention. As conflicts multiply at the borders of Europe, member states are closing access routes to exiles instead of hosting and protecting them as they should. In late summer of 2015, a few countries tried to break away from this logic by opening their borders to people who until now were facing deliberately impenetrable security systems. Europe quickly called these countries to order and requested them to focus on camps and new border guards rather than secure access routes and mobilizing civil society. For the EU, the migration policy “crisis” is not measured by the thousands of migrant deaths, but rather by the number of people who have managed to brave closed borders in order to assert their fundamental rights.

## Hotspots at the heart of the archipelago of camps

European laws are full of expressions designed to weaken the essentially repressive nature of migration policies. This is how the term “hotspot” made its way into official communications in the spring of 2015. The idea was to showcase the EU’s ability to react to the arrival of thousands of migrants in the Greek islands, at a time when numerous shipwrecks causing hundreds of victims attracted unprecedented media attention. Greece was then described as unable to control its borders and was identified as largely responsible for the “migration crisis”. In reality, this situation was the consequence of the policies driven by the EU (countries on the outskirts of the Schengen Area have always been the gatekeepers of Europe). It could be attributed to the largely predictable increase in the number of migrants, due in particular to the duration and the intensity of the conflicts in Syria.

CONTINUATION OF THE ARTICLE ON PAGE 2

## For more information

### OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS:

#### Hotspots state of play

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_hotspots\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_hotspots_en.pdf)

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Report of the Commission to the European Parliament on Relocation and Resettlement, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2016

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/fifth\\_report\\_on\\_relocation\\_and\\_resettlement\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/fifth_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf)

Most of the official documents and working documents from the European institutions (Commission, Parliament, Council...) are archived on the Statewatch website. Statewatch is a member of the Migreurop network: <http://www.statewatch.org/asylum/obserasylum.htm>

For a first glance at this documentation, see in particular:

#### “Managing Migration better in all its aspects: a European agenda on migration”

Press Release, European Commission, 13.05.2015  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-4956\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4956_en.htm)

#### “The hotspot approach to better manage exceptional migrant flows”

European Commission, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2015  
[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_hotspots\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf)

#### “A European Agenda on Migration, state of play, January, 2016”

European Commission  
[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/eam\\_state\\_of\\_play\\_20160113\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/eam_state_of_play_20160113_en.pdf)

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# Hotspots at the heart of the archipelago of camps

CONTINUATION OF THE ARTICLE OF PAGE 1

Generally described as “reception facilities and centres of first reception in member states located on the front line”, the hotspots are the new face of an old policy which has created detention camps on the borders of the EU. In a European Commission glossary, the term is explained in a section entitled “Save Lives and Secure the External Borders”, even though the dominant logic is dissuasion and not assistance: the hotspots should help to harden the “reception conditions”, and thus discourage boat-people from taking to the sea. Such an objective is bound to fail in the case of exiles fleeing particularly tragic conflicts and crises. The “hotspot approach” aims to force the Italian and Greek governments, assisted by European agencies [insert] to sort and select from the incoming migrants the minority that could be “relocated” [insert p.3]. Following the floating period at the end of summer 2015, when a few countries such as Germany opened their borders, barricading them became the norm. From December 2015, when the first hotspots were opened in Sicily and on the islands of the Aegean Sea [map p. 3], exiles were quickly crowded into make-shift camps where some have remained trapped for months. The hotspots organise in effect an assortment of prisons articulating identification and selection camps (choosing between the “bad” migrants and the “good” asylum seekers), holding camps (for asylum seekers who may be “relocated”) and pre-removal camps (for those considered “undesirable”...). The concentration-camp rational, which has characterized EU policy for many years, has moved into a new phase – turning the Greek and Italian is-

lands into a huge archipelago of camps. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, entire regions of Italy and Greece have thus become “areas of forced confinement”.

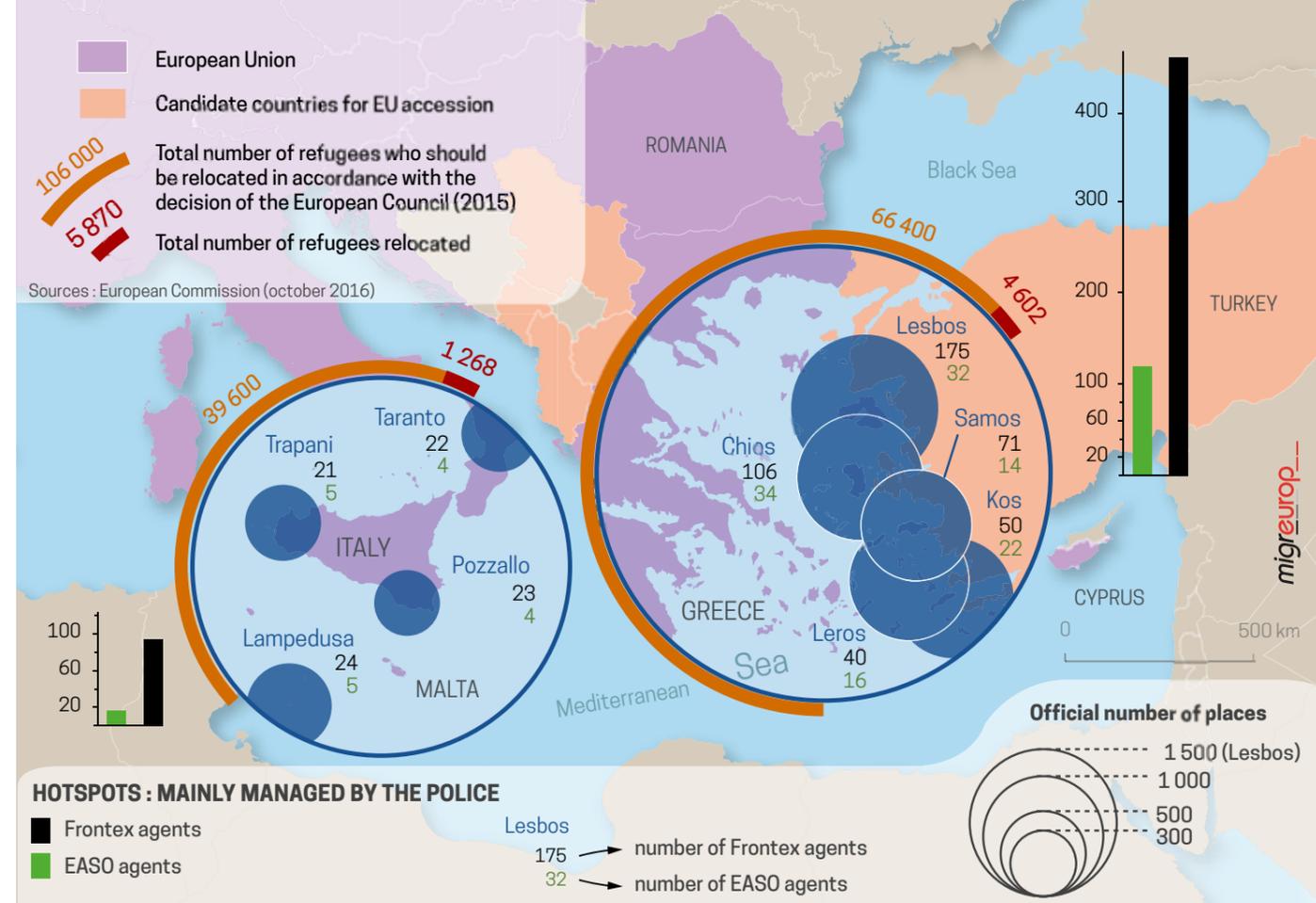
Apart from the official hotspots, similar traps exist all along the migration routes, from the Region of Agadez in Niger, to the North-West of France, passing along the Libyan and Moroccan coasts. This widespread detention is the result of the choices made by the EU and its partners for immigration management. On the one hand, migrants are blocked in the first European host country by closing off a number of border crossing points, eg Idomeni (near the Greek-Macedonian border) or Ventimiglia (a border town between Italy into France). On the other, the EU is attempting to stem arrivals by negotiating support from countries such as Sudan or Ethiopia, and is trying to swiftly push back exiles to so-called “transit” countries. The agreement of March 2016 with Turkey, which has joined the ranks of “safe countries”, is typical of this bargaining process which bears little regard for legal formalism and migrants’ fundamental rights.

## FRONTEX: MORE SELECTION, MORE RETURNS

Hotspots differ from other camps due to the presence of many European agencies, like the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Europol, Eurojust and above all Frontex, the agency for external border controls, which was renamed the European Border and Coast Guard agency in September 2016.

With more than 500 agents in Greece and Italy (nearly four times more than the number of EASO), Frontex fingerprints newly arrived individuals, and interviews them to determine their nationality and the migration route they have taken. Frontex is also in charge of the forced returns of those not recognized as asylum seekers. Such practices existed before 2015, but have become systematic with the “hotspot approach”. Frontex has become the pivotal agency for European policies of selection and deportation of foreigners. The Italian Government has suggested that the selection should also be carried out at sea, with “floating hotspots”. Frontex is already doing it, particularly in the Sicilian Channel.

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## “RELOCATIONS”, A PRETEXT FOR DEPORTATION

Presented in the European Agenda on Migration, launched in May 2015 by the European Commission as being the EU face of solidarity to the inappropriately named “migration crisis”, relocation consists of dividing up among different member states migrants identified in Greek and Italian hotspots as eligible for refugee status. After the Commission decided not to make this measure binding (many states having refused to accept the “quotas” imposed upon them), 23 countries committed “on a voluntary basis” in September 2015 and after interminable haggling, to take in a total of 160,000 potential refugees over two years. This is a ridiculously low figure given the number of people already present at the time in Greece and Italy. It should be noted that among the criteria to determine how many migrants would be relocated in each host country (number of inhabitants, GDP, number of refugees already received, unemployment rate...), the refugee’s choice of destination was never taken into account. This serves as a reminder that even though their right to request protection is recognized, asylum seekers are still forbidden to circulate freely in the EU.

One year after the introduction of this measure, approximately 6,000 refugees have been “relocated” to a European country, although some countries have only accepted a few dozens, or none at all [see map above]. This serves to show, as if it were needed, the failure of a mechanism established only to make hotspots appear humane and rational. These hotspots are in fact compulsory crossing points to have a chance of being selected for transfer to a host country. But an extremely slim chance since firstly, this applies to few nationalities (principally Syrians and Eritreans), and secondly, European countries are in no hurry to honor the commitments they have reluctantly signed up to, and finally, because the selection process is complicated and bureaucratic. The vast majority of migrants, i.e. those who are not selected for relocation, are therefore doomed to be deported or trapped in Greece or Italy. In the case of Greece, this also depends on whether the exiles arrived before the enforcement of the EU-Turkey agreement, according to which even those eligible for asylum can be pushed back. Based on the illusory prospect of relocation, thousands of exiles have become the hostages of the “hotspot approach”, which aims, first and foremost, to sort, register, marginalize and possibly deport men and women that Europe has refused to “host”.