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THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA 2015-2020 - CASE STUDY OF GREECE AND LIBYA

ABSTRACT

The issue of uncontrolled migration to the European Union through the Mediterranean Sea is a phenomenon that has been with members of the community for many years. In this article, the authors have analyzed the migration crisis between 2015 and 2020 in the context of two countries - Greece and Libya. The former was the most common transit route and destination for illegal immigrants during the study period. Tens of thousands of people are still living on its territory, awaiting asylum or the possibility to travel to another EU country. In contrast, Libya (like Turkey) is regarded by migrants as the "door to a better world," and it is through Libya that the main Central Mediterranean route passes. The sea route across the Mediterranean is chosen by citizens of both Middle Eastern and African countries.

keywords:
migration, Mediterranean Sea, migration crisis, Greece, Libya

INTRODUCTION

The authors decided to develop two case studies (because of their research experience), so the analysis will deal with the determinants of migration across the Mediterranean and its specificities. The first is Greece, the EU member state most affected by the migration crisis. The most significant number of migrants tried to enter Europe through its territory between 2015 and 2020. The second case study is Libya, through which the vast majority of people trying to reach the European continent by sea pass.

Actions taken by the European Union and member states to reduce migration flows across the Mediterranean Sea have had a significant impact on

their decline. However, thousands of people in Spain, Italy, and Greece seek safety, stability, or simply a better life in Europe.

European attempts to stem migration by strengthening national borders and expanding detention centers beyond its borders influence the expansion of smugglers' networks to help them get through checkpoints and borders and ultimately onto boats in the Mediterranean Sea. The challenges and dangers they face begin again on land for those who make it to Europe. The lack of shelter, living in unsanitary conditions, or migrant camps significantly affects the security of both the individual and the host country.

The migration crisis that occurred after 2014, which in the opinion of many experts is the biggest challenge for the European Union in this aspect, was caused by many changes and a wide range of factors that took place in the MENA region, such as, among others, revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East and their consequences in the form of overthrowing governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, as well as unstable states racked by civil war or terrorist organization activity.[1]

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN IN MIGRATION PROCESSES

The scale of uncontrolled migration to the European Union in 2014 was 261,000 people. It is worth noting that the most burdened with the migration pressure were the routes leading through the Mediterranean Sea, that is, the Central Mediterranean (over 159,500 people), Eastern Mediterranean (46,500), and Western Mediterranean (6,000).[2] In 2014 - 212,000 people reached the EU by sea and 49,000 by land,[3] confirming that migrants mainly chose the sea as their migration routes.

The scale of uncontrolled migration to the EU quadrupled in 2015, with studies showing that more than 1 million[4] people got through by sea, confirming the crucial importance of the Mediterranean basin for migration. The analy-

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[1] See further: E. Daniiloudi, M. Gąsior, *Nielegalne ruchy migracyjne z obszaru MENA na kontynent europejski przez terytorium Grecji*, [in:] *Efekty przemian politycznych w państwach Bliskiego Wschodu i Afryki Północnej na początku drugiej dekady XXI wieku*, ed. Czupryński, A., El Ghamari, M., Polak, A., Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warsaw 2015, pp. 103-108.

[2] Frontex, *Annual Risk 2015*, https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-publishes-western-balkans-annual-risk-analysis-2015-dCUqfL, (01.06.2017), pp. 16.

[3] Ibidem.

[4] Frontex, *Annual Risk 2016*, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf, (01.06.2017), pp. 17.

sis also made it possible to identify the "first-entry" countries, i.e., those to which refugees headed first, and these were Greece (853,650), Italy (153,842), and Spain (3,845). Migrants reached these three countries mainly by sea. In the case of Greece and Italy, the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Mediterranean routes were used most often, while in the case of Spain, the Western Mediterranean route.[5]

Illegal migration occurs in three parts of the Mediterranean Sea, i.e., western, central, and eastern. Migration in the Western part involved crossings from Morocco and Algeria to Spain through two enclaves, i.e., Ceuta and Melilla. In this case, citizens of Morocco, Algeria, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Senegal were the most frequent sea border crossers. Illegal migration in this part of the sea was also supported by smuggling groups operating in Mali and Nigeria.

Migration in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea involved crossings from Turkey to Greece, with Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis most prevalent among the migrant groups.

The leading maritime migration routes located in the Central Mediterranean were concentrated off the coast of Libya and Tunisia. Despite the Eastern Mediterranean route being the most heavily trafficked, the central part had the highest number of drownings. The analyses suggest that the main reason for this situation was the dramatic transport conditions of migrants. Smuggling groups, with an eye on profit, organized departures on overcrowded boats with the result that transported persons often fell overboard or died of suffocation. Many reported cases of vessels sinking due to overcrowding have been reported, which often occurred in the Central Mediterranean.[6]

The migration crisis has required several actions by Community members to address its causes and minimize its effects. In the case of the problem analyzed, however, the authors would like to draw attention to the operational activities undertaken in the Mediterranean region. These concerned the activities of the EU agency Frontex and the Common Security and Defence Policy activities, such as operations Aenas and Triton in the central part of the sea; operations Hera, Minerva, and Indalo in the western sea; and Operation Poseidon in the eastern sea.

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[5]   Ibidem.
[6]   See further: Mediterranean, https://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean, (08.06.2017); Mixed Migration Flowes in the Mediterranean and Beyond, Reporting period 2016, https://www.iom.int/; Mixed Migration Flowes in the Mediterranean and Beyond. Annual Report, 2015, https://www.iom.int/ oraz Latest Global igures, https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean

A CASE STUDY OF TRANSIT COUNTRIES: GREECE AND LIBYA

Case study - Greece

Since the early 1990s, Greece has been struggling with increasing migratory movements.[7] The main reason for the increased migration was its rapid economic development and its membership in the European Union and later the Schengen Area.

Migration flows to Greece should be divided into two types. The first of them takes place in the form of so-called transit traffic, whose destination is other European Union countries (most often Italy, Spain, France, Germany or the United Kingdom) - immigrants spend a few weeks or months resting after the hardships of the journey, waiting for other family members to arrive or looking for a job that will pay for their further travel. The second type is those immigrants who have chosen Greece as their destination and settle there permanently.

The migration crisis that began in 2015 overlapped with Greece's ongoing economic and social crisis since 2008. In 2015, its public debt was 176%[8] of GDP, and the Greek government was seeking a third bailout program from the European Central Bank to introduce more reforms. The need to unify those responsible for border security and refugee assistance was a significant challenge for Greece.

The main migration route to Greece is through the border with Turkey. There are other places by land via the Evros River or by sea from, among other cities, Izmir. The problem of the Greek-Turkish borders is not only due to their porosity,[9] but also to the relationship between the two countries.[10] Continuing, tense relations lead to a lack of border and migration cooperation.

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[7] They were primarily citizens of the newly emerging countries after the breakup of the Socialist Federation of the Republic of Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. According to statistics, there were almost 800,000 legal immigrants in Greece at the beginning of the 21st century, accounting for more than 7% of the population - author's note.

[1] [8] Ελληνικη Στατιστικη Αρχη, Η ελληνικη οικονομια, Ελστατ, (Hellenic Statistical Authority, The Greek Economy, Elstat), Athens 2018, pp. 6-18.

[2] [9] In 2000, a bilateral agreement was signed on combating crime - especially terrorism, organized crime, including drug trafficking and illegal migration. A year later, a protocol on specific cooperation and readmission of nationals of both countries and third countries who illegally crossed the border was adopted. The Greeks hoped that the two would seal the border with Turkey and speed up expelling detained illegal immigrants. However, the formal path itself takes months, and the Turkish side rejects most applications that do not concern its citizens. Between 2002 and 2006, Greece submitted nearly 2,000 formal readmission applications covering more than 23,000

Nearly 229,000 attempts to illegally cross the Greek border were recorded in the first half of 2015. According to the European Parliament, more than 106,000 people tried to enter Italy, and less than 8,000 people tried to enter Spain during the same period.[11] According to Greek police data, Greece, with a population of less than eleven million, is the most used land route for migrants' illegal movement, mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Albania.[12]

In 2015, 911,000[13] persons attempted to cross the Greek border illegally, which, compared to the previous year, indicates an increase by 1,081% (77,000 such cases were reported in 2014).[14] During the spring/summer period alone, about 300 people reached the Greek islands of Kos and Lesbos each day (Samos and Chios were also frequent destinations).

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foreigners detained during that period. Turkey admitted less than 3,000 applications for readmission. Less than 1,500 were finally accepted (in 2000-2005, more than 420,000 illegal immigrants illegally crossed the border with Turkey, of which more than 159,000 were citizens of Middle Eastern countries). A similar situation occurred in 2010-2011 - Turkey agreed to readmit about 1,500 migrants, eventually accepting just over 700. See further: Baldwin – Edwards, M., *Migration between Greece and Turkey: from the "Exchange of Populations" to non-recognition of borders*, http://aei.pitt.edu/7043/1/Migration_between_Greece_and_TurkeyV3a.pdf, p. 3.

[3]   10   See further: Daniiloudi, E., Spory i konflikty wewnątrz Sojuszu Północnoatlantyckiego na przykładzie Grecji i Turcji, [in:] Unia – NATO – strategiczne problemy bezpieczeństwa, ed. Compa, T., Rajchel, J., Załeski, K., Wyższa Szkoła Oficerska Sił Powietrznych, Dęblin 2012, pp. 98-110, Daniiloudi-Zielińska, E., Geopolityczne uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa Republiki Grecji, [in:] Paradygmaty badań nad bezpieczeństwem. Jednostki, grupy i społeczeństwa, ed. Kopczewski, M., Kurkiewicz, A., Mikołajczyk, S., Wyższa Szkoła Bezpieczeństwa, Poznań 2015, pp. 445-460.

[4]   11   European Parliament, Migration: civil liberties committee to debate Commission plan for permanent relocation scheme, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type =IM-PRESS&reference=20150921O94019&language=EN, (22.12.2021).

[5]   12   Αρχηγειο Ελληνικησ Αστυνομιασ, Εκθεση για το σοβαρο & οργανωμενο εγκλημα στην ελλαδα ετουσ 2016, (Hellenic Police Headquarters, Report on serious & organized crime in Greece in 2016 r.), Athens 2017, pp. 10.

[6]   13   For comparison, in 2012 (the period of migration related to the Arab Spring), 76,873 persons were apprehended crossing the border illegally or staying in Greece. In the same period, 726 people smugglers were arrested (in 2011, there were as many as 848 such arrests).

[7]   14   Αρχηγειο Ελληνικησ Αστυνομιασ, *Εκθεση για το σοβαρο & οργανωμενο εγκλημα στην ελλαδα ετουσ 2015*, (Hellenic Police Headquarters, Report on serious & organized crime in Greece in 2015 r.) Athens 2016, pp. 19-20.

In October alone, Frontex recorded 150,000 attempts to cross the Greek-Turkish border (a year earlier, it was only 8,500).[15]

At this point, it should be noted that so far, Greek society's assistance to refugees has been centered on the so-called principle of solidarity. Few organizations focusing their activities on immigrants even before the migration crisis were legally registered, nor did they operate in a manner commonly understood as humanitarian aid. Their activities were based on building relationships with immigrants according to the principles of self-help and solidarity. Therefore, for the first six months, the Kara Tepe camp on the island of Lesbos was pretty much just a plot of land on which tents stood (either local or government authorities did not administer it). The immigrants were cared for by local residents and unregistered organizations that provided emergency medical and food aid, among other things. It was only in the second half of 2015 that humanitarian organizations,[16] such as UNHCR and Médecins Sans Frontières (after UNHCR declared a state of emergency, the European Union decided to allocate financial support to Greece to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees), began to operate in Lesbos, which had become the epicenter of the European migration crisis. In the third quarter of 2015, Frontex also increased by 114 the number of officers supporting the operations of the Greek services both in border protection and registering and identifying refugees.

The Statement between the European Union and Turkey on Migration Cooperation, signed in March 2016, has become one of the main pillars of EU migration policy[17] and significantly reduced irregular migration across the Greek-Turkish border. As a consequence of the closure of the so-called Balkan Corridor in 2016 for attempting to cross the Greek border illegally, the police and port authorities arrested about 204,000 people (a decrease of 77.5% compared to 2015), and 950 human smugglers were detained (1,500 were detained the year before).[18] The most significant increase was in the months of January-March 2016 (80% of all immigrants registered this year),[19] and the leading way

[8]   15   Frontex, https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/540-000-migrants-arrived-on-greek-islands-in-the-first-10-months-of-2015-4uH4FJ, (22.12.2021).

[9]   16   K. Rozakou, Solidarity #Humanitarianism: The Blurred Boundaries of Humanitarianism in Greece, Etnofoor, 29 (2), pp. 103-104.

[10]   17   See further: European Council, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/, (22.12.2021).

[11]   18   Αρχηγειο Ελληνικησ Αστυνομιασ, *Εκθεση για το σοβαρο & οργανωμενο εγκλημα στην ελλαδα ετουσ 2016*, (Hellenic Police Headquarters, Report on serious & organized crime in Greece in 2016 r.), Athens 2017, pp. 8-9.

to cross the Greek border remained by sea. More than 40% of immigrants entering Greece by sea were children.[20]

According to Frontex, more than 42,000[21] illegal immigrants entered Greece in 2017 (a decrease of more than 140,000 compared to 2016), the most significant number of which were citizens of Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. However, a significant problem was the processing time for asylum applications, which took months due to many applications and overcrowded refugee centers.[22]

In 2018, there was an increase in illegal attempts to cross the Greek border by land.[23] Fifty-six thousand five hundred people were detained - an increase of 34%, most of whom (as during the previous year) were Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis. In 2019, more than 83,000[24] people entered Greece (of which more than 50,000 by sea),[25] accounting for more than 60% of all illegal EU border crossings. In contrast, a significant decline occurred in 2020, when only 20,000 [26] people were recorded, most of whom were Syrians, Turks, and Afghans. It is difficult to point out an apparent reason for such a sudden drop, although the total number of all attempts to cross the external border of the European Union has decreased by more than 16,000 people; also undoubtedly one of the reasons was the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The short distance between the Greek islands and Turkey's maritime border is ideal for people smugglers because it limits coast guard response times to just a few minutes. Therefore, NATO forces have been requested to

[12]   19   Frontex, *Annual Risk 2017*, https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-publishes-risk-analysis-for-2017-CpJiC8, (22.12.2021).

[13]   20   Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2018*, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_for_2018.pdf, (22.12.2021), pp. 36.

[14]   21   Ibidem, pp. 17.

[15]   22   Ibidem, pp. 33.

[16]   23   Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2019*, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_for_2019.pdf, (22.12.2021), pp. 16.

[17]   24   Ibidem, pp. 22.

[18]   25   Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2020*, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2020.pdf, (20.12.2021), pp. 20.

[19]   26   Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2021*, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_2021.pdf, (20.12.2021), pp. 14.

assist the Greek officials and Frontex. NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 was to carry out monitoring, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities in Greece's territorial waters.[27] However, the NATO mission focused only on the northern Aegean due to Turkey's objections.

The migration crisis that began in 2015 was undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges of its kind that Greece faced (especially if we consider its economic situation at the time). Despite the decline in immigration movements alone, to this day, there are tens of thousands of people in its territory, in many refugee centers, awaiting asylum or the opportunity to travel to other European Union countries, such as France or Germany. There are currently three main UNHCR offices in Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, and Lesvos) and six field units (5 of which are on the islands) that continue to support the Greek government and NGOs with humanitarian aid. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there may be over 90,000 refugees in Greece, with over 80,000 asylum applications pending.[28] (to date, more than 191,000 people have been granted asylum).

Case Study - Libya

The analysis of Libya as a case study in the context of migration provides a complex example of a country that is a destabilized state after 2011. Unprecedented levels of forced migration[29] accompanied the 2011 Libyan revolution, and the ongoing crisis in Libya is one of the most complex migration crises in the world. Libya appears as the only country in North Africa, which despite many European Union activities and numerous financial outlays for democratic transition, is still in transition. It is considered a failed state, with its transition path not similar to any other Arab country where a dictatorship was overthrown after the Arab revolutions launched in 2011. Since then, Libya mired in power struggles, terrorist organization activities, and economic crisis has been struggling with migration through various routes such as the one from East Africa or the Middle East, mainly from the south to the north and other routes, less evident due to the geographical factor - towards Southern Europe.

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[20]   [27]   D. Keridid, *The Migration/Refugee Crisis and the (Un/Re) Making of Europe: Risks and Challenges for Greece*, Uluslararası İlişkiler / International Relations 15, no. 58 (2018), https://www.jstor.org/stable/26605009, (15.12.2021), pp. 77.

[28]   High Commissioner for Refugees, *Greece full sheet*, https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/212, (16.12.2021), pp. 1.

[29]   International Organization for Migration, *IOM Libya Annual Report 2020* , https://libya.iom.int/resources/iom-libya-annual-report-2020-0, (12.12.2021).

Migratory activity during this period is associated not only with uncontrolled migration but also with human trafficking.

Refugees most commonly use the East Africa route to Libya and migrants originating from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan. Along this route, Ethiopia and Sudan have become important transit countries due to their well-established migration routes and advanced smuggling networks. For example, refugees and migrants leaving Somalia often head to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where people from Ethiopia and Eritrea join them to find a smuggler to take them to Khartoum, Sudan, and then directly to Libya. The level of risk is related to local political events and changes rapidly, resulting in frequent fluctuations on individual routes. Migrants and refugees from West Africa often pass through Mali or Niger and then continue to Libya, sometimes via Algeria. These routes are complex and lengthy, and as a result, must be done in stages. Many pursue their destination by bus from Mali to Agadez, Niger, which is relatively easy due to the ECOWAS free movement policy.[30]

Niger has become the most common transit country for refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa, showing that in 2016 alone, about 120,000 to 150,000 people passed through this route. According to analyzed reports,[31] it is estimated that more than half of all refugees and migrants from West Africa, who reached the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2014, passed through Agadez (an estimated 80,000). Migrants arriving in Algeria from Niger or Mali traveled further, usually to the Libyan coast or less frequently to Algeria, where they feared control and detention. At the beginning of the period under review, an important alternative route to Libya was Chad, most often used by Chadians, western Sudanese, and Cameroonians.[32]

The route from the Middle East was notably used by Syrians who used land, sea, and air routes (mainly from Jordan) to reach Libya (or Algeria and Egypt). Prior to 2013, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt did not require visas for Syrians, allowing them to travel by air. However, the number of Syrians arriving by air to Libya dwindled after violence erupted and Tripoli Airport was closed in 2014. Some instead flew to Sudan, which did not require visas until 2020 and itself underwent a shakeup after the overthrow of former ruler Omar al-Bashir

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[30] Altai Consulting, *Irregular Migration between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean* , IOM, 2015, https://rodakar.iom.int/oimsenegal/sites/default/files/Altai%20 Consulting-Free%20Movement%20and%20Migration%20in%20West%20Africa-Final%20Report.pdf, (20.03.2020).

[31] Mixed Migration Hub, Mixed Migration Trend Report, 2015, www.mixedmigratio nhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/MHub-Trend-Bulletin-August-2015.pdf .

[32] High Commissioner for Refugees, *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads – Mapping of Migration Routes from Africa to Europe and Drivers of Migration in Post-revolution Libya*, December 2013, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/52b43f594.html (29.12.2021).

in 2019 (from where they chose to travel to Greece). In Sudan in late 2020, there were about 100,000 Syrian refugees. Syrians arriving in Libya (via Sudan and Egypt) planned to continue their journey to Europe from the Libyan coast - mainly via the Central Mediterranean route. Many used smugglers in Libya due to unfamiliarity with the terrain, the desert, or the number of checkpoints that must be crossed.[33] Refugees and migrants are usually sent to a port between Tripoli and the Tunisian border. However, departure points are flexible, moving along the coast depending on the level of control. When weather and security conditions allowed for the crossing, refugees and migrants boarded pontoons, almost always overcrowded, and sailed away at night to avoid detection. The trip across the sea to Italy or Malta usually took two to six days. This sea voyage had a lasting impact on the survivors, both physically and mentally.[34]

The analysis of the reports showed that in each of the analyzed years, the situation was very dynamic and conditioned by both the local situation and weather conditions. In October 2015 alone, 8,565 arrived in Italy from Libya (compared to 15,279 in 2014 at the same time).[35] The decline is likely due to Syrians now reaching Europe via Greece. In 2016 - 363,348 migrants from Libya arrived in Europe by sea, of which 181,436 arrived in Italy.[36] The Central Mediterranean route (between Libya and Italy) was the most dangerous crossing, with 4,579 migrants killed or missing out of 5,082 missing migrants on all routes in 2016.

In 2017 - 621,706 migrants from 40 countries were identified in Libya. During 2017-2018, Libya was a central transit point for people trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. More than 600,000 migrants in Libya (the total estimated number is between 700,000 and 1 million - no exact figures are available), are particularly vulnerable to abuses and human rights violations. Increasing interception/hunting has increased the number of migrants detained and exposed to abuse.[37] As of 2019 - 636,426 migrants, 343,180 IDPs, and 447,388 returnees could be identified in Libya. Of that number, 4,596 mi-

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[33] Altai Consulting, *Migration Trends Across the Mediterranean: Connecting the Dots. IOM UN Migration*, 2015, https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-trends-across-mediterranean-connecting-dots, (29.12.2021).

[34] M. El Ghamari, M. Bartoszewicz, 2020, (*Un) Sustainable development of minors in Libyan refugee camps in the context of conflict-induced migration* [in:] *Why the Physical Environment Matters: Sustainability's Role in Child Development*, *Sustainability* Journal ISSN 2071-1050, 4537, pp. 20.

[35] https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/situation_reports/file/IOM-Libya-Situation-Report-October-2015.pdf, (13.05.2020).

[36] https://www.iom.int/news/iom-libya-releases-2016-displacement-trends-analysis-report, (13.05.2020).

[37] IOM LIbya, 2018, https://humanitariancompendium.iom.int/appeals/libya-2018, (13.05.2020).

grants were in government-run detention centers across the country.[38] In 2020, there were approximately 600,000 migrants in Libya. An increase in the number of displaced persons and a slow decline in the number of migrants were observed, which can be attributed to the impact of COVID-19 on the economy and population mobility. Throughout the year, the number of migrant departures from Libyan shores exceeded that of the previous year, and more than 6,000 migrants were returned to shore by the Libyan Coast Guard. By October 2020, more than 75,000 migrants had left Libya since the start of the pandemic, and 84 of the 161 missing migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea were found in November alone.

It is noteworthy that the overcrowded, unseaworthy boats usually used by smugglers or traders capsized. Many migrants rescued at sea by the Libyan or Italian Coast Guard or others in the Mediterranean Sea have been transferred back to Libya to detention centers.[39]

Although Libya remains the main departure point for North African refugees and migrants to Italy (90% in 2016), departures from Egypt have increased (an estimated 6% of arrivals to Italy in 2016 departed from Egypt). Most exit points are located near Alexandria, but as in Libya, they shift depending on the level of control. However, the political situation in Egypt is much more stable, and the harsh conditions of departure have led to high rates of detention.[40]

In conclusion, it should be stressed, that under pressure from the EU, the Libyan authorities have radically expanded their SAR zone (the Italian SAR operation, Mare Nostrum), preventing NGOs from entering it. It has also led to an increase in the number of migrants returning to Libya - where they are at risk of torture, slavery, and death - despite calls from the UN to stop such practice. Refugees and migrants receive information about transit options from various sources, including their communities, people who have previously made the journey, and individuals and groups they meet at specific points along with the route or major transportation hubs. New information and communication technologies and social media platforms facilitate access to and dissemination of information across and within networks. Migrants and refugees who reach Europe often call, text or use social media to contact those in Libya, who in turn

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[38]   IOM LIbya, 2019, https://libya.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl931/files/documents/Libya%20Annual%20Report%202019_final.pdf, (13.05.2020).

[39]   M. El Ghamari, M. Bartoszewicz, 2020, (*Un)Sustainable development of minors in Libyan refugee camps in the context of conflict-induced migration* [in:] Why the Physical Environment Matters: Sustainability's Role in Child Development, *Sustainability* Journal ISSN 2071-1050, 4537, pp. 20.

[40]   UNHCR, *Desperate Journeys: Refugees and Migrants Entering and Crossing Europe via the Mediterranean and Western Balkan Routes*, February 2017, available at www.unhcr.org/58b449f54.pd, (01.12.2021).

often call family and friends in their home country and relay information about their trip.

Although the absolute number of migrants traveling from Libya has declined, the EU Delegation for Border Control and SAR Activities in Libya has increased the migrant death rate from one in 38 arrivals in 2017 to one in 14 in 2018, to one in three in early 2019.

CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing migration flows across the Mediterranean Sea presents several threats to European integrated border management. Analyzing the events of recent years, the authors would like to emphasize that the migration crisis of 2015-2020 was the biggest challenge for the European Union, requiring immediate solutions. More than 1.5 million people reached the EU by the sea during those five years and expected adequate aid from European countries. Sadly, also about 14,000 people are victims of human smuggling who died on their way to Europe.

Frontex reports data shows that Greece was the most common route to the European continent for migrants. Although it is rarely chosen as a destination country by citizens of Middle Eastern and African countries for economic and social reasons, it is nevertheless an important transit stage to Europe. This is due, among others, to its geographic location (proximity to Turkey, with a large number of islands facilitating the sea crossing) and the fact that it was the only country in the region belonging to the EU and the Schengen area. During the period under review, at least 1,316,500 people (representing more than 10% of the Greek population) tried to enter Greece by sea and land from Turkey, according to official figures. The reduction in the number of illegal attempts to cross the Greek-Turkey border was caused mainly by increased activities of the Greek services, Frontex operations, as well as the sealing of the border by Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement (thanks to which Turkey also started to respect the agreements signed with Greece in previous years).

Financial and humanitarian aid provided by the EU, UNHCR, and NGOs, among others, has also been an essential factor in countering the migrant crisis in Greece, thanks to which a humanitarian crisis was largely avoided. There are several large refugee centers (e.g., on the islands of Kos, Chios, Lesbos, Samos) and dozens of temporary accommodation sites located throughout Greece.

The Libyan case analyzed shows that the situation, especially in late 2019 and early 2020, has significantly worsened in face of the pandemic for those seeking asylum in Europe across the Mediterranean Sea, especially for the people of sub-Saharan Africa, whom the UN says are highly vulnerable. Many migrants are violently detained in centers managed by the GNA's De-

partment for Combating Illegal Immigration (DCIM) and secured by militias. Often, it is Frontex, the EU's border and coast guard agency, that leads Libya's coast guard in illegally repelling and detaining asylum seekers in Europe. This cooperation intensified after Italy signed a memorandum of understanding with the GNA in Tripoli in 2017. The conditions in the detention centers were already well known (German diplomats compared them to concentration camps). An Amnesty International report speaks of a "*hellish landscape of detention.*" Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) withdrew from two official government detention centers due to violence and inhumane treatment last June.

Nevertheless, despite the Geneva Convention and EU rules prohibiting the return of asylum seekers to dangerous territories and a European Court of Human Rights ruling citing torture and death in Libya, the practice continues. On October 1, 2021, Interior Ministry militias allegedly acted against drug and human traffickers. No such arrests have been announced, but more than 5,000 migrants have been violently detained, including 540 women - some pregnant - and 215 children. Many refugees and migrants are victims of human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, torture, forced labor, and sexual violence, and the sea crossing from Libya to Europe itself is mediated by smugglers and human traffickers.[41]

STRESZCZENIE

Problem niekontrolowanej migracji do Unii Europejskiej przez Morze Śródziemne to zjawisko, które towarzyszy członkom wspólnoty od wielu lat. W niniejszym artykule autorki podjęły się analizy kryzysu migracyjnego w latach 2015-2020, w kontekście dwóch państw – Grecji i Libii. Pierwsze z nich było najczęściej wybieraną drogą tranzytową, jak również docelową dla nielegalnych imigrantów w badanym okresie. Do dzisiaj na jej terytorium przebywa w oczekiwaniu na azyl lub możliwość wyjazdu do innego państwa UE kilkadziesiąt tysięcy ludzi. Natomiast Libia (podobnie jak Turcja) traktowana jest przez migrantów jak „drzwi do lepszego świata" i to przez jej terytorium przebiega główny etap trasy środkowo-śródziemnomorskiej. Drogę morską przez Morze Śródziemne wybierają zarówno obywatele państw Bliskiego Wschodu, jak i Afryki.

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