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# BEFORE THE BOAT

## UNDERSTANDING THE MIGRANT JOURNEY

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EU ASYLUM: TOWARDS 2020 PROJECT



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UNDERSTANDING THE MIGRANT JOURNEY

By Jacob Townsend and Christel Oomen

May 2015

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research, part of the Migration Policy Institute Europe and International Migration Initiative/Open Society Foundations research project 'EU Asylum: Towards 2020', is supported by the Open Society Foundations. In this project, which is a continuation of the work begun in 2014 as part of the 'European Asylum Beyond 2014' initiative, MPI Europe and IMI are working with states, institutions, and other stakeholders in a multiyear initiative aimed at generating practical ideas for the immediate and longer term.

The research project aims to contribute to development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) consistent with the European Union's interests, values, and obligations, through research on challenges and options on asylum to inform the development of evidence-based policies and laws. The project involves broad consultations with Member States, EU institutions, civil society, international organisations, and academics, to draw on their expertise and seek to work towards consensus on the many key questions around responses to asylum on which perspectives differ.

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Cover design: April Siruno  
Typesetting: Liz Heimann

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Suggested citation: Townsend, Jacob and Christel Oomen. 2015. *Before the boat: Understanding the migrant journey*. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	1
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	2
<b>II. MIGRANT DECISION-MAKING AND PERCEPTIONS</b>	
<b>OF RISK</b> .....	3
<i>A. Motivations</i> .....	3
<i>B. Risk assessment and decision-making</i> .....	4
<i>C. Information networks and processing</i> .....	5
<b>III. OPERATIONS OF SMUGGLING NETWORKS</b> .....	8
<i>A. Client relationships</i> .....	8
<i>B. Organisational structure</i> .....	8
<b>IV. POLICY RESPONSES</b> .....	10
<i>A. Awareness campaigns</i> .....	10
<i>B. Strategies for cooperation with third countries</i> .....	10
<i>C. Improving the evidence base</i> .....	11
<i>D. Improving research methods</i> .....	13
<b>V. CONCLUSION</b> .....	14
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	15
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</b> .....	18



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mediterranean maritime crossings—and the deaths and injuries that often result from failed journeys—have reached unprecedented levels. With more than 220,000 people intercepted in 2014, policymakers have been at a loss as to how to stem the flow of boats and thus contain the spiraling human, financial, and political costs involved, despite the development of a ten-point plan in April 2015 to address the crisis.<sup>1</sup> To address this challenge, deep, sophisticated insight is needed into the decision-making (at every step of the process) of those who undertake these journeys—including how they assess the risks involved—and the business model and organisation of smuggling networks. Currently, policymakers are trying to make decisions while in the dark about many of these elements, forcing them instead to rely on simplistic assumptions and limited research.

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*Deep, sophisticated insight is needed into the decision-making (at every step of the process) of those who undertake these journeys.*

The evidence base suffers from a number of limitations in particular:

- ***Migrant decision-making.*** The academic literature on migration often suggests that push and pull factors are static and one-dimensional; in fact, migrants make active choices at each step of the journey and often recalibrate their priorities in transit or in anticipation of secondary movements. Moreover, studies often suffer from a destination bias, in that they analyse migration journeys from the perspective of host countries and those select migrants who have succeeded in reaching their destination.
- ***Information and risk assessment.*** While policymakers frequently posit that migrants must have been unaware of or received poor information on the risks of maritime crossings, interviews with migrants suggest that they are highly attuned to threats, and that their risk assessments are often more nuanced and farsighted than models indicate. For example, would-be migrants may accord threats to the goal of long-term settlement greater weight than risks to immediate safety. In this context, poor information—whether transmitted through word of mouth, social norms, or smugglers—is unlikely to be the sole factor behind risky decisions. More research is needed on the relationship between policy and procedural changes, how this is conveyed through information channels, and the effects on migrants' decision-making process at each step of their journey.
- ***Smuggling networks.*** A dearth of longitudinal research on the organisational structures of migrant-smuggling networks hampers attempts to crack down on them. While it is clear that smugglers respond quickly to policy and processing changes—for example, faced with the Mare Nostrum patrols, smugglers reduced ships' travel times and used cast-off ships with limited capacity to hold food and water—less is known about the structure and economy of smuggling networks, and the location of pressure points and weak spots. Recent studies suggest that many smuggling networks rely on associates in official or otherwise professional positions (e.g., those who offer travel, immigration, or language services, or who bankroll smuggling operations). The inherent difficulty of identifying individual accomplices, however, should not detract from efforts to determine and disrupt vulnerabilities in the system.

Taken together, these gaps in the evidence hinder effective policymaking. Campaigns to raise awareness of the risks of maritime crossings, funded by the European Union and conducted in cooperation with migrant-origin countries, have done little to change the minds of individuals committed to emigrating. To improve third-coun-

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<sup>1</sup> EUROPOL, 'Joint Operation Team Launched to Combat Irregular Migration in the Mediterranean', updated 17 March 2015, [www.europol.europa.eu/print/content/joint-operational-team-launched-combat-irregular-migration-mediterranean](http://www.europol.europa.eu/print/content/joint-operational-team-launched-combat-irregular-migration-mediterranean); European Commission, 'Joint Foreign and Home Affairs Council: Ten point action plan on migration', (press release IP15/4813, 20 April, 2015), [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-4813\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4813_en.htm).

try cooperation, policymakers in Europe require better knowledge of the political economy of migrant smuggling and its effects on countries of origin. Also, more evidence is needed on how people make decisions at each step of the process—including prior to departure—and on how migrants and smugglers respond to changes in destination countries’ policies and procedures.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The flow of boats across the Mediterranean has become a symbol of Europe’s difficulties in controlling its borders—and of the desperation that drives people to make a perilous journey that results in death or injury for so many. As well as posing a humanitarian disaster, maritime crossings have increased border management costs and exacerbated public tensions around immigration. Clearly, addressing the problem requires a better understanding of the dynamics and drivers of these migrants’ movements, at every step of the journey. Yet policy debates on improving maritime border controls reveal how little policymakers know about how migrants decide their course of action, receive information, interact with smugglers, and calculate risk.<sup>2</sup>

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*A well-informed strategy to address smuggling services... would need to understand both the customer and the supplier.*

The number of people intercepted at sea or upon arrival on Europe’s shores in 2014 is unprecedented: more than 200,000 migrants—most of them from Syria and the Horn of Africa—had been detained in 2014.<sup>3</sup> Although this phenomenon appears obvious in hindsight, mainstream planners apparently did not predict it in advance.

A well-informed strategy to address smuggling services like those facilitating Mediterranean crossings<sup>4</sup> would need to understand both the customer and the supplier. This report suggests that there are big gaps in policymakers’ knowledge of both. Putting the migrant in the spotlight, the report first examines gaps in the evidence on migrants’ decision-making processes, perceptions of risk, and access to information. It then analyzes smuggling networks, highlighting issues that have been unexplored or obscured by common research approaches. Next, the report connects these knowledge gaps to weaknesses in policymaking, and suggests ways to strengthen the foundation of evidence for Europe’s responses. The report concludes with several recommendations based on what is known—and on what is not.

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2 This report uses the term ‘migrant’ for every type of person traversing the Mediterranean to Europe, with the exception of the facilitators/smugglers who are ferrying them. Subcategories of these maritime migrants include asylum seekers and labor immigrants without a visa.

3 Europol, ‘Joint Operation Team Launched’.

4 This report focuses on migrant smuggling, while noting that there are practical and conceptual linkages between Mediterranean smuggling routes and some human-trafficking syndicates.

## Box I. Data Sources

This report is based on significant primary research, alongside secondary sources such as publicly available data and academic studies.

The primary research was commissioned by a number of governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and private-sector organisations. Some is unpublished, with references to specific sets of interviews in this report. In many cases, sources remain anonymous, particularly where they are smugglers or people preparing to migrate irregularly. The basic method of interviewing these sources is to rely on a presence in the country, the diaspora, and the migrant community over time, generate confidence in the purpose of the questions, and protect sources. Primary sources include:

- interviews with officials from international organisations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union, and EU Member States such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Denmark; and
- interviews with 120 people in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa who were considering irregular migration to Europe, were en route, or had succeeded.

## II. MIGRANT DECISION-MAKING AND PERCEPTIONS OF RISK

### A. *Motivations*

Policymakers' understanding of what motivates migrants to undertake perilous journeys is incomplete. The academic literature suffers from three limitations in particular:

- a narrow focus on push-pull factors, at the expense of a better understanding of the choices migrants face at various points in their journey;
- a biased perspective, arising from a focus on information collected in destination countries and the potential for overgeneralising interpretations of specific cases; and
- fixed analysis of fluid phenomena—for example, changing motives over time, and evidence on initial drivers of movement that may not apply to secondary movements.

Most studies list the push-pull factors underlying migration in static, almost one-dimensional terms. For example, commonly cited pull factors include economic advancement, education, family reunification, protection, and language and culture; common push factors include human-rights violations. Little attention is given to the dynamics of decision-making processes both pre- and postdeparture. In fact, while the motives, constraints, and opportunities of people considering migration may differ, even 'forced' migrants make active choices regarding migration.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the 'forced' nature of migrants' movement may become a less helpful predictor of their course as they move farther from home.

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<sup>5</sup> Ilse Colette van Liempt, 'Navigating borders: inside perspectives on the process of human smuggling into the Netherlands' (PhD dissertation, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies [IMES], University of Amsterdam, FMG, 2007), 74, <http://dare.uva.nl/document/2/46079>.



In addition, many studies are limited by a ‘destination bias’. The majority of relevant research is conducted in destination countries, which means it is, by definition, based on the experiences of successful migrants. To find out more about the motivations of migrants, more research in origin and transit countries is needed. There are some recent contributions to the body of literature and qualitative research on migrant movements and motivations, for example a recent study commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that combined 92 migrant interviews in six different countries, and a Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) study that focused on migrants from the Horn of Africa.<sup>6</sup> At their best, these contributions are very informative in mapping various migration routes from sub-Saharan Africa through Libya and shedding light on the various types of dangers migrants may experience. However, these studies lump the motives of hundreds of thousands of migrants together and do not mention anything about, for example, those who change, fail, or abandon their plans to go to Europe altogether

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Finally, migrants’ ambition and motives to emigrate often change as they depart, travel, and arrive, for a number of reasons.<sup>7</sup> Individuals fleeing conflict are presumed to be seeking safety, but frequently embark on potentially deadly journeys—consider Somalis, Syrians, and Eritreans who cross the Mediterranean. Moreover, those who make secondary movements from transit countries—such as Syrians now fleeing new conflict in Iraq—often hope to move somewhere that offers greater long-term opportunity, not just the nearest safe country. In other cases, the difficulty of a journey may prompt immigrants to change their plans or their recollection of primary motives. For example, West Africans who explain in advance that they are seeking to work for a few years in Europe often recalibrate their (declared) ambitions and plans after enduring numerous hardships over many months on a trip they expected to be faster and simpler.<sup>8</sup> Finally, ambitions are not always fulfilled—quite the opposite in some cases—and people may fail at their attempts to move, or be pushed into decisions they did not want to make.<sup>9</sup>

Quantitative studies of asylum flows vary widely in the relative weight they accord to drivers of migration—such as poverty, conflict, and human-rights violations. But even if designed carefully, these general models are imprecise tools for understanding how emigrants—both individuals and families, those who make it, and those who don’t—choose their course of action. Policymakers continue to rely on studies that overgeneralise migrants’ motivations and overlook important differences across streams.<sup>10</sup>

6 Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS), *Going West: contemporary mixed migration trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya and Europe* (Nairobi: RMMS, 2014),

[www.regionalmms.org/fileadmin/content/rmms\\_publications/Going\\_West\\_migration\\_trends\\_Libya\\_Europe\\_RMMS.pdf](http://www.regionalmms.org/fileadmin/content/rmms_publications/Going_West_migration_trends_Libya_Europe_RMMS.pdf).

7 Susan Zimmermann, ‘Irregular Secondary Movements to Europe: Seeking Asylum beyond Refuge’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no. 1 (2009): 88.

8 Interviews with 32 migrants in West Africa, Libya, and Italy, conducted by Farsight personnel in 2014. These should be taken as anecdotal rather than robust, given the small and differentiated sample size.

9 For example, in one study a migrant who did not want to migrate illegally had done so anyway because he was able to borrow a passport. Another migrant, who made several attempts to go to Europe, eventually gave up and returned home. Joris Schapendonk, ‘Turbulent Trajectories: African Migrants on their Way to the European Union’ (PhD dissertation, Radboud University, 2012), 32, <http://repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/91326/91326.pdf?sequence=1>.

10 For example, a 2010 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) paper on migrant smuggling is still one of the most comprehensive and often-quoted studies, but provides little insight into the different streams and their respective options. UNODC, *Smuggling of migrants into, through, and from North Africa: A thematic review and annotated bibliography of recent publications* (Vienna: UNODC, 2010),

[www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant\\_smuggling\\_in\\_North\\_Africa\\_June\\_2010\\_ebook\\_E\\_09-87293.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant_smuggling_in_North_Africa_June_2010_ebook_E_09-87293.pdf).

A 2013 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Libya study attempts to describe different migrants groups in Libya, but generalises about millions of migrants and does not offer much insight on the scope or situations of these identified groups. Altai Consulting, *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads—Mapping of Migration Routes and Drivers of Migration in Post-revolution Libya*, Report prepared for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Tripoli: UN High Commissioner for Refugees),

[www.alticonsulting.com/mixedmigrationlibya/Altai\\_Consulting-UNHCR-Mixed\\_Migration\\_Libya.pdf](http://www.alticonsulting.com/mixedmigrationlibya/Altai_Consulting-UNHCR-Mixed_Migration_Libya.pdf).

## B. Risk assessment and decision-making

Thousands of people attempting to cross the Mediterranean have died or suffered injury in the past few years; with more than 3,400 recorded deaths in 2014 alone and at least 1,800 during the first five months of 2015.<sup>11</sup> Why would migrants continue to embark on such a perilous journey? One frequent explanation is that they do not understand the risks (or do not know about less dangerous alternatives), in particular those posed by unscrupulous smugglers. For example, the European Union’s Mediterranean Task Force recommends ‘that information should be communicated on “the grave risks and dangers” attached to irregular migration’, suggesting that poor information and lack of awareness are important contributors to the death toll at sea.

In fact, poor information may not go far toward explaining migrants’ decision to put themselves in danger, for a number of reasons:

- People are generally not very good at calculating risk, and routinely discount risk in everyday decisions
- The risk of death or injury may seem worth taking, especially when compared with immediate threats to personal safety
- Long-term risks are weighed against short-term risks, and may appear more important in a given moment; for example, migrants may worry more about future obstacles to finding work or summoning family members than about immediate risks to life and limb.

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*Even when people do correctly estimate a risk, it may seem insignificant in comparison with more immediate threats.*

Everyday life provides many examples of miscalculated risk. Riding a motorbike instead of driving a car illustrates how people discount well-known risks when making choices for themselves.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, most people planning to migrate across the Mediterranean can explain, in general terms, the inherent physical risks. When they talk about their own plans, however, they usually conclude that regardless of what the risks might be, the expected benefits easily outweigh them.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, even when people do correctly estimate a risk, it may seem insignificant in comparison with more immediate threats. A nongovernmental organisation (NGO) report on Syrian refugee families<sup>14</sup> indicates that once people have decided to get on the boat they may feel that there is no way back—even if they realise the full extent of the danger. For forced migrants, the possibility of death or injury in transit may seem rather abstract when compared with the concrete hardships and threats faced at home.<sup>15</sup> Understanding how migrants perceive potential risks and rewards of travel and weigh these against their current situation is essential to any analysis of clandestine movement.

11 UNHCR, ‘Focus on saving lives, says UNHCR, as numbers of people taking to the seas in search of asylum or migration passes 348,000 globally’, (news release, 10 December 2014), [www.unhcr.org/5481bf796.html](http://www.unhcr.org/5481bf796.html); International Organisation for Migration (IOM), ‘IOM Welcomes European Commission Proposals on Migration’, (news release, 14 May 2015), [www.iom.int/news/iom-welcomes-european-commission-proposals-migration](http://www.iom.int/news/iom-welcomes-european-commission-proposals-migration).

12 D. R. Rutter, Lyn Quine, and Ian P. Albery, ‘Perceptions of Risk in Motorcyclists: Unrealistic Optimism, Relative Realism, and Predictions of Behavior’, *British Journal of Psychology* 89, no. 4 (1998): 681–96.

13 Authors’ interviews with people preparing to migrate irregularly to Europe from West Africa and the Middle East, April 2014–March 2015.

14 Save the Children, *The Boat Is Safe and Other Lies: Why Syrian Families Are Risking Everything to Reach Europe* (Rome: Save the Children, 2014), [www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/RSYR-cf-12\\_ReportTheBoatIsSafe\\_24Jun14.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/RSYR-cf-12_ReportTheBoatIsSafe_24Jun14.pdf).

15 Mohamed Khachani, ‘La migration clandestine au Maroc’ (Analytic and Synthetic Notes, Irregular Migration Series, Demographic and Economic Module, CARIM-AS 2008/50, European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy, 2008), 13, <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/10094>.

Most research on human perceptions of risk focuses on tangible, short-term risks such as exploitation and injury. However, this misses the point for most migrants: the potential value of their movement is in the long term. Thus the greatest threats may derive from European laws and policies, as migrants consider future prospects for employment, potential for integration, and future opportunities to summon family members. Indeed, when prospective migrants shift from assessing risks to discussing expected benefits, it becomes clear during interviews that many are highly concerned but not necessarily accurate in assessing threats to their intended objective, i.e., long-term settlement in Europe. Once migrants have left their homes, their tolerance for long and lengthening time frames to achieve their goal may increase, so long as they can maintain confidence that the ultimate outcome is secure.<sup>16</sup> A more sophisticated method of analysing risk perceptions would therefore determine how migrants weigh short-term physical risks against risks to their long-term objectives—and both types of risk, in turn, against possible benefits.

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### C. *Information networks and processing*

Risk assessment and decision-making processes are driven by interactions of experience, beliefs, emotions, and information gleaned from the environment. Migrants' efforts to access and assess information appear to vary significantly. Of interviewees contemplating emigration toward Europe, many say they worked hard to figure out options and risks. Answers to follow-up questions indicate that many sought information actively but sporadically over several months or years, without much reflection on the quality of sources. A minority had alarmingly few sources of both information and advice.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, migrants may acquire different information at different points in the migration process, and may value it more highly the longer they are in transit. At transit hubs, migrants share information about security, transport possibilities, and job opportunities. Some delay further travel as they take time to assess risks and options. Comparing the cases of those who delay against those who move quickly through transit points may provide useful information to policymakers. Another fruitful avenue for further research would be to compare the influence of the different information sources encountered in transit. Of these sources, three main ones will be analysed here in more detail:

- Word of mouth, mainly through family and friends who have taken the trip, and as gleaned from community narratives and common wisdom
- Official awareness-raising campaigns, including online platforms run by international organisations
- Intermediaries and smugglers, who may employ social media, among other channels, to promote their services.

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<sup>16</sup> Authors' interviews in the Netherlands; Rick Feneley, 'Undercover journalists publish firsthand account of asylum seeker journey to Australia', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2013, [www.smh.com.au/world/undercover-journalists-publish-firsthand-account-of-asylum-seeker-journey-to-australia-20131116-2xnd6.html](http://www.smh.com.au/world/undercover-journalists-publish-firsthand-account-of-asylum-seeker-journey-to-australia-20131116-2xnd6.html); Mehdi Alioua, 'La migration transnationale: logique individuelle dans l'espace national: l'exemple des transmigrants subsahariens à l'épreuve de l'externalisation de la gestion des flux migratoires au Maroc', *Social Science Information* 47, no. 4 (2008): 703.

<sup>17</sup> Authors' interviews.

## 1. Word of mouth

Most potential migrants hear information from family and friends, at home and abroad. Social media may play a role in dispersing current information and gossip on irregular migration routes. More is known about the use of social media to find smugglers in Mexico and the United States than in the European context, but anecdotal reports point to Facebook as a source of information.<sup>18</sup> It is certainly easy to find online social networks in languages such as Arabic, Kurdish, and Somali that are dedicated to sharing migration information. When interviewed, members of such online groups indicate that social media facilitates but does not replace face-to-face discussion; only a few used online networks to organise direct negotiations with smugglers. The major impact of social media is an increase in the volume and speed of updates on migration prospects, policies, and incidents. To communicate effectively in this melee, governments in Europe need to support accurate, timely, and trusted contributions to these conversations.

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Overall, the most important influences come in three categories. First, those who have taken the trip relay information, advice, and encouragement to people considering the same. Second, even in areas of origin saturated with migration agents and facilitators, word-of-mouth referrals are the most frequent way to approach someone connected to a smuggling network. Third, and perhaps most important, the existence of a diaspora in a given set of destinations creates—and normalises—interest in emigration in generation and those destinations in particular.<sup>19</sup> For example, a teenage boy in Somalia may have a strong sense of community connections and opportunities in the United Kingdom even before he is conscious of it. Particular communities in Syria are likely to discuss Sweden, considering that country's current openness to Syrian refugees. Yet it may be argued that social networks and historical ties play a greater role in influencing destination choice than do admission and asylum policies,<sup>20</sup> especially for long-term settlement.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Recruiters, smugglers, and intermediaries

Interviews with migrants considering a journey to Europe suggest that they understand that smugglers are operating a business, and that the information received should be interpreted with this in mind. But how much individual migrants rely on smugglers' advice varies. People with personal connections in Europe, who provide encouraging examples and advice, may be particularly vulnerable to overconfidence—and to local facilitators' positive spin on costs, risks, and conditions at destination. Close relationships have been destroyed when migrants, departing with the referrals and rosy pictures offered by family members in Europe, are deceived by smugglers or meet with accidents along the way.<sup>22</sup>

18 For example, see Agence France Presse, 'Syrian migrants in Egypt undeterred by deadly shipwreck off Malta', 20 September 2014, [www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=728762](http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=728762).

19 Jeff Crisp, 'Policy Challenges of the New Diasporas: Migrant Networks and Their Impact on Asylum Flows and Regimes' (Working Paper no. 7, Transnational Communities Programme, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, 1999), [www.unhcr.org/3ae6a0c6c.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3ae6a0c6c.html).

20 Eric Neumayer, 'Asylum Destination Choice: What Makes Some West European Countries More Attractive than Others?' *European Union Politics* 5, no. 155 (2004): 156–80.

21 Authors' interviews with migrants without documentation in Europe suggest that at least some are moving through asylum processes in Member States that are not their ultimate destination for long-term settlement; i.e., once they are legally able to do so, they will move within the European Union.

22 Authors' longitudinal research using small samples of asylum seekers, most of whom are now refugees and permanent residents in Western countries.

### 3. Migrants' understanding of migration policy

Interviews with migrants from sub-Saharan Africa indicate that their understanding of migration policy in Europe varies in accuracy.<sup>23</sup> Given variations in migrants' education and access to resources, this is not altogether surprising; it may also indicate that information is interpreted to support ambitions rather than to inform decisions. For example, migrants hearing of increased European patrols in the Mediterranean may imagine that this implies a safer journey, since they will be picked up sooner. The same migrants, hearing that Europe is reducing patrols, may conclude that their journey is more likely to succeed because of reduced chances of detection. While both calculations make some sense, taken together, they highlight an underlying mental framework that is determined to justify an emigration decision, and interprets contradictory events in one direction.

Some studies have found a link between stricter asylum policies and reduced application rates in particular countries. For example, in 2000 the Netherlands initiated a procedure by which asylum determinations are made within 48 hours; application rates dropped by 75 percent in just four years.<sup>24</sup> When faced with a large influx of Eritrean asylum seekers in 2014, the Netherlands used a combination of emergency measures to reduce the flow significantly within months.<sup>25</sup> However, the European Union as a whole has limited capacity to turn the volume up or down at will. Migrants continue to find different avenues to reach and remain in the European Union. At present, it is a challenge to avoid a zero-sum game among Member States, in which the best that any single country can achieve is to divert unwanted migrants to another Member State. Understanding in more detail how migrants receive and react to changes in policies could help to support a mutually beneficial approach that strengthens protection standards (both in terms of outcomes and appropriate access), improves efficiency, and increases coherence across agencies and countries.

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## III. OPERATIONS OF SMUGGLING NETWORKS

There is a lack of longitudinal research on the organisational structures of migrant-smuggling networks that facilitate crossings of the Mediterranean. A few points are fairly clear, however: smuggling is not centrally coordinated, involves corruption, and produces different trips for different nationalities. Networks differ across national groups, and discrimination may occur against outsiders. Different nationalities may travel in groups to specific destinations, depending on a number of variables, including how much they are able to pay for the journey. Perhaps most importantly, histories of migration from one place to another can reinforce connections that differ among nationalities or ethnicities. While smuggling operations are clearly diverse and may involve many links in the chain, they are not especially sophisticated.

<sup>23</sup> Authors' interviews with 65 migrants from various countries in sub-Saharan Africa throughout 2014. The findings are indicative of issues to explore rather than definitive regarding actionable patterns or trends.

<sup>24</sup> Focus Migration, 'Netherlands', accessed December 2, 2014, <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/The-Netherlands.2644.0.html?L=1>.

<sup>25</sup> Examples include interagency cooperation, more border control resources in strategic locations, gathering information from diplomatic missions, and questioning arriving migrants on the routes they have taken, as explained in a letter written to the Dutch Parliament by then Minister of Justice Fred Teeven, 'Kamerbrief over berichtgeving over betrokkenheid van de Eritrese overheid bij mensensmokkel en afpersing vluchtelingen', 3 June 2014, [www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2014/06/04/berichtgeving-over-betrokkenheid-van-de-eritrese-overheid-bij-mensensmokkel-en-afpersing-vluchtelingen.html](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2014/06/04/berichtgeving-over-betrokkenheid-van-de-eritrese-overheid-bij-mensensmokkel-en-afpersing-vluchtelingen.html).



## A. Client relationships

Smugglers do not facilitate Mediterranean crossings out of goodwill; one study called their relationship with migrants ‘short-lasting and distant’.<sup>26</sup> Smuggling is a commercial transaction, and smugglers can be brutal in their efforts to maximise profits and to minimise risks to themselves, sometimes to the detriment of migrants. Faced with the Mare Nostrum search-and-rescue patrols, smugglers reacted by aiming to have boats discovered and rescued. They launched overcrowded boats with limited food and water, calculating that the boats would be discovered by the Italian Navy or a commercial vessel.

Smuggler-client relationships can be unpleasant. Law enforcement officers who have overheard smugglers’ phone conversations report that they discuss commercial calculations regarding their ‘cargo’ in clinical, even callous, terms.<sup>27</sup> Recent testimonies, particularly of Syrian refugees, describe how smugglers rob, abuse, and even murder migrants. The media has highlighted a number of shocking stories, such as an incident on 19 July 2014: five alleged smugglers were arrested for allegedly stabbing 60 people to death on a boat.<sup>28</sup> Yet, after arriving in Europe, many migrants protect the identity of smugglers. Perhaps they fear reprisals, hope to avoid getting involved in a legal case, or know of others back home who may need a referral.

## B. Organisational structure

Organised criminal groups are capable of evolving faster than governments and law enforcement, beginning with the simple advantage that they do not need to wait for new policies, legislative change, and budget allocations. Smugglers have adapted their routes and methods in response to EU border controls, resulting in longer and potentially more dangerous journeys for migrants.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the diversification of routes has led to an unintended increase in the area that EU countries have to monitor.<sup>30</sup> The growth of the geographical area covered may also draw more people into employment in the smuggling industry.

Most smuggling occurs via networks that are fluid and change over time.<sup>31</sup> Recent studies of migrant smuggling report that professionals who offer travel, immigration, language, or employment services are often used to facilitate the process. In some cases, the top level of a smuggling enterprise is occupied by someone also active in a legitimate business, such as a travel agency or transport company.<sup>32</sup> Interviews with 199 Iranians preparing to travel irregularly in December 2014 and January 2015, for example, included a common pattern of relying on ‘legitimate’ travel agents who also provided fraudulent documentation and could arrange bribes in transit.

On the one hand, these are useful observations. They suggest diminishing returns from border control and

26 Richard Staring, ‘Facilitating the Arrival of Illegal Immigrants in the Netherlands: Irregular Chain Migration versus Smuggling Chains’, *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 5, no. 3 (2004): 276.

27 Authors’ interviews with law enforcement officers in the United Kingdom and Australia.

28 ANSA, ‘Sixty “stabbed to death” in weekend migrant disaster’, 22 July 2014, [www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it/english/sixty-stabbed-to-death-in-weekend-migrant-disaster-no736952/](http://www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it/english/sixty-stabbed-to-death-in-weekend-migrant-disaster-no736952/).

29 Philippe De Bruycker, Anna Di Bartolomeo, and Philippe Fargues, *Migrants smuggled by sea to the EU: facts, laws, and policy options*, MPC Research Report 2013/0+ (San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2013), [www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/MPC-RR-2013-009.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/MPC-RR-2013-009.pdf), 4.

30 Franck Düvell and Bastian Vollmer, *Irregular Migration in and from the Neighbourhood of the EU: A comparison of Morocco, Turkey, and Ukraine*, Overview Transit Migration Report (D10) prepared under the research project CLANDESTINO, ‘Undocumented Migration: Counting the Uncountable. Data and Trends across Europe’ (Brussels: European Commission, DG Research and Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-Based Society, 2009), [www.hwwi.org/typo3\\_upload/groups/31/4\\_Background\\_Information/4.6.Link\\_library\\_InternalDocuments/Transit\\_report\\_COMPAS\\_Sept09.pdf](http://www.hwwi.org/typo3_upload/groups/31/4_Background_Information/4.6.Link_library_InternalDocuments/Transit_report_COMPAS_Sept09.pdf).

31 Ferruccio Pastore, Paola Monzini, and Giuseppe Sciortino, ‘Schengen’s Soft Underbelly? Irregular Migration and Human Smuggling across Land and Sea Borders to Italy’, *International Migration* 44, no. 4 (2006): 3.

32 *Ibid.*, 20.

enforcement: experience with organised crime indicates that it can be difficult to combat loose networks of collaborators, each of whom may be easily replaced upon arrest.<sup>33</sup> If migrant-smuggling networks are indeed of this nature, this suggests significant limits to what enforcement can achieve. It is likely that smugglers will continue to be able to move people across the Mediterranean—after all, migrants are smuggled across borders as tightly controlled as the one between North Korea and China, suggesting that bribes, ingenuity, and determination can succeed in the face of militarised policing and harsh penalties.

On the other hand, a focus on the difficulty of the task may obscure vulnerabilities that can be tapped. Smuggling networks, however fluid, still involve hierarchical relationships and long-standing arrangements among people known to one another. A better understanding of these hierarchies—and of the usual types of outside accomplices used—could help direct law enforcement efforts.

Second, even flat networks have nodes that vary in importance—the most interconnected subway system can still be heavily disrupted by problems in a few central stations. Research that provides only a snapshot of a pattern does not necessarily provide what is needed: a detailed picture, assembled over time, revealing the most important vulnerabilities in a given network and taking into account that those who enable migrant-smuggling networks are not always in the most obvious positions. For example:

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*Smuggling networks, however fluid, still involve hierarchical relationships and long-standing arrangements among people known to one another.*

- In a country that supposedly has migration agents everywhere, there may still be important clusters of agents in certain locales; some communities may depend on a small number of individuals for advice and support to prepare departures.
- In law enforcement institutions that contain corrupt officers, removing just a small number of people in senior positions may have a large impact on the problem. Meanwhile, officers with specific geographical or ethnic connections may play unexpectedly important roles in coordinating protection for smugglers' activities in particular locations.
- Relatives and friends may be of critical important to financing or preparing individuals for journeys with smugglers, a role that is not necessarily captured by a focus on the criminal network.

Third, on a related point, snapshots of prices for illicit migration services are of limited use in estimating the size and importance of the migrant-smuggling economy.<sup>34</sup> Prices and businesses need to be monitored consistently. The value of migrant smuggling to its participants and surrounding communities varies by location and over time. Generating ongoing estimates of total revenue, costs, profitability, and employment will help illuminate two points for action: the best places to attack smuggling networks, and the best sources of support for those attacks.

Finally, snapshot research regularly alludes to powerful people who protect smuggling—and to law enforcement officers who are bribed to support it. But to what degree are these actors involved? And does the 'protection' of the powerful involve benign neglect, or direct supervision and service provision? How much money is at stake? These are key questions for operational responses—and also for political strategy.

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33 UNODC, 'Smuggling of Migrants by Sea' (Issue Paper, UNODC, Vienna, 2011), 46, [www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Issue-Papers/Issue\\_Paper\\_-\\_Smuggling\\_of\\_Migrants\\_by\\_Sea.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Issue-Papers/Issue_Paper_-_Smuggling_of_Migrants_by_Sea.pdf).

34 UNODC, *Smuggling of Migrants into, through, and from North Africa*, 37–8; RMMS, *Going West*.

## IV. POLICY RESPONSES

### A. Awareness campaigns

In 2014 the European Union funded information campaigns in Niger and Sudan/Ethiopia conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR, to the tune of 1 million euros each. The stated objective was ‘to clearly communicate and raise awareness concerning the serious risks and dangers faced by migrants attempting to reach Europe through irregular channels, including the perils of irregular sea crossings and the threats posed by smugglers and traffickers’.<sup>35</sup> IOM is using ‘traditional communications channels’<sup>36</sup> and UNHCR an ‘electronic platform’ to upload ‘authentic testimonials’. These projects are still being evaluated, and the effectiveness of their methods is not yet known. Some studies suggest that awareness campaigns have a limited effect on reducing irregular migration because potential migrants often dismiss them as biased propaganda.<sup>37</sup> Among other barriers, if people are emotionally committed to emigration, it is likely that they will reject discouraging information and justify their rejection by presuming the source is biased. What is clear is that any successful approaches will need significant and quick scaling-up and adaptation, if they are to meet the geographical diversity and current intensity of challenges.

### B. Strategies for cooperation with third countries

To reduce irregular flows, the European Union and Member State governments have increasingly looked to countries of origin and transit to intervene. The barriers to effective action in these so-called third countries vary but are considerable. Most source and transit countries have shown low levels of sporadic interest in stemming the tide. To strengthen cooperation, policymakers and other stakeholders in the European level could aim to provide:

- **Richer evidence.** Systematic assessment of current practices is critical to devising a strategy appropriate for a given country of origin or transit. Such a strategy would account for the dynamics of migrant smuggling, including the political economy at local and national levels. A better evidence base would also help the European Union determine the relative weight to place on law enforcement, disruption, returns, protection, and capacity building, as well as the best methods of engagement for each.
- **Better understanding of limitations.** European countries and institutions need to be realistic about the capacity of origin and transit countries. For example, North African governments typically have little control over their remote borders. Due to limited central government capacity, only narrow, direct enforcement cooperation is likely to yield tangible results in mitigating smuggling. More engagement by nongovernmental actors is crucial for integral interventions.
- **Support of third-country capacity.** The European Union offers financial and technical support to build third-country capacity in law enforcement, protection, and asylum processing as elements of a broader

<sup>35</sup> European Commission, ‘Annex to the Commission Implementing Decision Concerning the Adoption of the Work Programme for 2014 and the Financing for Union Actions and Emergency Assistance within the Framework of the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund’, C(2014) 5652 final, August 8, 2014, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund/union-actions/docs/awp\\_2014\\_amif\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund/union-actions/docs/awp_2014_amif_en.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Presumably, this includes radio and television broadcasts, community events, and printed materials.

<sup>37</sup> Jørgen Carling and Maria Hernández-Carretero, ‘Protecting Europe and Protecting Migrants? Strategies for Managing Unauthorised Migration from Africa’, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13 (2011): 42–58.



cooperation package. But while cooperation agreements have been signed, practical implementation has been slow. The European Union’s primary mechanisms for support of third-country capacity have been grants to UNHCR and IOM, funds to national governments undertaking this work, and political engagement through delegations. Country strategies need to include information about what can be expected at the local and national level. Research and careful benchmarks will be necessary to set political priorities for engagement and the effective use of scarce resources for third-country cooperation.

The experience of EU efforts to cooperate with third countries to stop the smuggling of migrants from and through North Africa has wider lessons. Agreements with particular regimes in Libya and Tunisia proved successful in the short term but fragile and difficult to replace when the governments changed hands.<sup>38</sup> For longer-term and more comprehensive solutions, broad-based political engagement must be made a greater priority in countries of origin and transit. Member States’ embassies and EU delegations seem to agree that the political importance of stopping irregular migrant arrivals in the European Union is not shared by third-country partners.<sup>39</sup>

Improving political engagement is important for many reasons, including the role that third-country partners can play in enriching data. As has been mentioned throughout this report, EU policies need to place more emphasis on the diverse backgrounds and decision-making processes of migrants—a shift that requires gathering systematic information on migrant groups and their methods of movement. Alternatives to irregular migration, too, need to be evaluated from the migrant’s perspective. Better data can also help predict changes in migration patterns before they become crises, which will in turn inform political engagement.

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### C. Improving the evidence base

Frontex states that there are ‘many unknowns as to the international dimension of the organised crime groups involved in smuggling activities’.<sup>40</sup> As noted in this report, policymakers also have significant blind spots around the motivations, information, and decision-making processes of migrants. The next generation of EU and Member State strategies must be founded on more systematic evidence. In particular, two gaps will need to be addressed:

- **Migrant decision-making.** Decisions made by European institutions and EU Member States clearly affect asylum and migration flows: the reason for travel is the attractive economic, political, and social conditions available in Europe, so removing these outcomes would remove the motivation for movement. However, that is largely a theoretical consideration, since it is essentially impossible to deny

38 Even under dictators such as the Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and the Libyan leader Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, there was little central oversight of border management. Local tribes, traders, officials, and other facilitators determined who could cross the border and for what price. The European Union’s successful control of migration from Libya and Tunisia in the 2000s was based on political agreements with these powerful dictators, which shifted smuggling interests away from migration.

39 Views of various (im)migration policymakers interviewed by the authors during 2014 in Brussels, Copenhagen, the Hague, and London.

40 Frontex, *Annual Risk Analysis 2014* (Warsaw: Frontex, 2014), [http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annual\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2014.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2014.pdf), 67.

all arrivals to Europe. So, what conditions influence migrants' interest and commitment to make the journey, and which policies? There is a need to pinpoint why and how some people move, some stay, some return, and others give up en route. Understanding how migrants make such decisions is important to tailoring policy responses to specific groups of potential migrants, rather than addressing general populations or countries. The focus should be on decisions, not 'root causes'.

- ***The impact of policy change.*** To evaluate the effects of migration and asylum policies in Europe, better research is needed to explore how migrants and smugglers understand and use these policies to their benefit. There is evidence to suggest that smuggling methods and migrant flows have changed significantly year by year, yet the cause-and-effect interplay of policies, smuggler practices, and migrant decisions are not commonly investigated.<sup>41</sup> This is surprising, given that even small changes have major effects—for example, changes in one country's border screening procedures can divert flows of migrants to a fellow EU Member State. In the Mediterranean, EU Member States have previously relied on 'pushback' operations<sup>42</sup> that have now been outlawed by the European Court of Human Rights; further investigation is needed to determine what other methods of naval cooperation might prove effective, particularly in light of the current expanded Operation Triton and proposed military intervention EUNAVFOR Med, explicitly intended to disrupt the business model of smugglers and traffickers of people in the Mediterranean.<sup>43</sup>

Several approaches would improve the evidence base. First, the current bias of sources toward destination countries and successful migrants must be changed. Interviews with migrants in destination and transit countries are invaluable: how prospective migrants imagine their future is just as revealing as how they recollect their past. It is also necessary to collect data that are specific to particular populations of migrants, rather than derived from national populations or overall categories of migrants. For example, a minority of Syrians come to Europe by boat: the focus should be on understanding them rather than looking at macrolevel issues affecting all Syrians. Similarly, studying the economic outcomes of refugees across Europe will be less useful than exploring, say, the interpretation and communication of economic success by Eritreans who arrived in the past year. A similarly targeted approach is needed to evaluate the different information sources migrants use, the accuracy of the information they receive, and the way in which they use it—including making the decision not to migrate.

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*There is a need to pinpoint why and how some people move, some stay, some return, and others give up en route.*

Second, it is useful to look at how migrants plan their finances at home, in transit, and upon arrival. It appears that many migrants' journeys rely to some extent on collective decision-making, for example, through discussions with family members at home and in destination countries. Collective decisions are likely to be particularly sensitive to financial issues.

Third, little is known about the interaction between formal and irregular channels of migration. This gap is surprising, given that the European Commission has suggested a need 'to explore further possibilities to open legal channels which give an opportunity for migrants to reach Europe in a regular manner. Such channels will also help to fight abuses and irregular migration'.<sup>44</sup> That expanding legal migration would reduce incentives for ir-

41 On a broader issue, an independent study of what worked and did not work in Australia's efforts to counter maritime migrant smuggling over the past decade could illuminate options, opportunities, and constraints for Europe.

42 The European Court of Human Rights describes 'pushback' operations as bringing back to Libya the boats with clandestine migrants that are intercepted on the high seas.

43 Council of the European Union, 'Council establishes EU naval operation to disrupt human smugglers in the Mediterranean', (press release 301/15, 18 May 2015), [www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/05/18-council-establishes-naval-operations-disrupt-human-smugglers-mediterranean/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/05/18-council-establishes-naval-operations-disrupt-human-smugglers-mediterranean/).

44 European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Work of the Task Force Mediterranean', COM(2013) 869 final, 4 December 2013, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-isnew/news/news/docs/20131204\\_communication\\_on\\_the\\_work\\_of\\_the\\_task\\_force\\_mediterranean\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-isnew/news/news/docs/20131204_communication_on_the_work_of_the_task_force_mediterranean_en.pdf).

regular migration is a logical hypothesis, but thus far unproven. It is critical that the European Union investigate how different groups of migrants obtain and respond to information on, access to, and others' experiences of formal migration options. Among other benefits, such research would improve understanding of the connections between student visas, short-term work options, and the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)—asylum (i.e., long-term settlement) being the 'product' that smugglers promise to provide. As one channel of entry is closed, how many migrants, with what characteristics, switch to other channels?

Fourth, more needs to be known about the political economy of the smuggling industry in source communities, transit points, and across Europe. To address this gap, research needs to be undertaken into industry structures, patterns of cooperation and conflict in these industries, hierarchies and enabling nodes, revenues and profitability, and the perspective and powers of customers. Snapshots will not suffice. Analyzing patterns of financial flows is warranted, as is assessing the relative benefits of investment in (1) identifying suspicious transactions versus (2) collecting intelligence in source and transit locations.

#### *D. Improving research methods*

The above gaps in evidence arise because some of the questions are difficult to answer, and may require collecting information in challenging environments. Desk-based data crunching and interviews in destination countries are useful as a starting point. Where research proceeds further afield, such as in transit countries, the trend in recent years has been to conduct short-term, snapshot studies of migrant communities or particular smuggling networks and towns in North Africa, such as the UNHCR study mentioned earlier. The results are interesting and provide qualitative insights into particular examples of methods and types of actors. They tend, however, to be highly specific to one place time and time, and thus limited in their relevance.

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*The first step to coordinating approaches is to collect data in a systematic way from both source and transit locations over time.*

Policymaking processes within EU Member States tend to be of two types. First, domestic policy changes are reactive and driven by immediate national or local political needs. Second, long-term strategies are directed at third countries without much evidence of what is needed or would be effective. The lack of coordinated research is apparent, and may be hampering the responses of both EU institutions and Member State governments.

As has been discussed, the first step to coordinating approaches is to collect data in a systematic way from both source and transit locations over time. Research might include:

- broader surveys of communities with high numbers of emigrants, for example to identify patterns in people who move to migrate and those who do not;
- interviews with people considering migration, for example to identify patterns of association between personal characteristics and preferred destinations;
- monitoring the prices of illicit migration services, for example to assist and evaluate enforcement efforts;
- interviews with key informants, such as smugglers and community leaders, to understand the dynamics of smuggler businesses and to identify supporters and spoilers in efforts to manage migration; and

- focus-group discussions, to support in-depth analysis of migrant and family decision-making.

A challenge for the European Union is that governments and international organisations are not well suited to this work. Respondents are unlikely to be honest with those same institutions that provide them with resources, interview them for asylum claims, deport them, or detain them.

The second step is to coordinate intelligence and cooperation efforts among Member State governments. Any information gathered in this way would complement field research—the priority here being to develop more sensitive, direct insights into actors in the industry, the political economy of smuggling, and ways to support disruption and political engagement. Whether to go as far as the Australian government, which has made migrant smuggling an additional priority of foreign intelligence services, is a matter for debate.<sup>45</sup> But if decreasing impunity and increasing friction in smuggling networks is a priority for Europe, greater investment in intelligence collection and cooperation among Member State law enforcement agencies will likely pay off.

## V. CONCLUSION

This report does not suggest that an end to migrant smuggling is in sight; instead, it suggests using systematic, careful research to decide the best ways to reduce crime, save lives, protect vulnerable people abroad, and uphold public support for certain types of migration at home. The next generation of European strategies on migration will need to be much more sensitive to the viewpoints of migrants, the incentives of smugglers, and the links between internal and external policies. Perhaps most important, policy has to drive operations—not the opposite.

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*Unlike drugs, the ‘product’ provided by migrant smugglers is not in third countries—it is in Europe. In fact, it is Europe.*

While there appears to be consensus that the European Union should play a larger role in addressing smuggling overseas, there is a risk of misplaced energy, for two reasons. First, the framework of asylum, immigration and integration policies at home constrains what EU institutions can achieve in third countries. Unlike drugs, the ‘product’ provided by migrant smugglers is not in third countries—it is in Europe. In fact, it is Europe.

Second, there are many characteristics of smuggling networks that the European Union is ill-suited to address. For example, smuggling networks are fluid, nimble, and appear sensitive to Member State policies, while the European Union’s external action instruments are slow and tend to lack diversity. Law enforcement, communications, and quick-impact research will benefit from coordination among European countries, but will not be

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45 Public sources show that at least 35 million euros have been allocated to the Australian Secret Intelligence Service for work on migrant smuggling over the past five years. See Parliament of Australia, ‘Counter-people smuggling measures, Budget review 2014-15 Index’, accessed 21 May 2015, [www.aph.gov.au/about\\_parliament/parliamentary\\_departments/parliamentary\\_library/pubs/rp/budgetreview201415/peoplesmuggling](http://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/rp/budgetreview201415/peoplesmuggling); Parliament of Australia, ‘Australian Government spending on irregular maritime arrivals and counterpeople smuggling activity’, last updated 4 September 2013, [www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/PeopleSmuggling](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/PeopleSmuggling); Australian Minister for Home Affairs, ‘\$1.3 Billion to Combat People Smuggling and Strengthen Australia’s National Security’, 12 May 2009, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/100941/20090612-1218/www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/ministerdebus.nsf/page/MediaReleases\\_2009\\_SecondQuarter\\_12May2009-\\$1.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/100941/20090612-1218/www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/ministerdebus.nsf/page/MediaReleases_2009_SecondQuarter_12May2009-$1.html); Parliament of Australia, ‘Responding to boat arrivals, Budget Review 2011-12 Index’, accessed 21 May 2015, [www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201112/Boat](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201112/Boat); Australian government, ‘Part 2: Expense Measures’, accessed 21 May 2015, [www.budget.gov.au/2011-12/content/bp2/html/bp2\\_expense-11.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2011-12/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-11.htm).

successful if delegated to EU institutions.

Where the European Union can play an important role is by advancing Member State interests in foreign relationships and by applying long-term methods to address smuggling. Among EU institutions, delegations abroad need to prioritise migration, asylum, resettlement, and refugee issues. Readmission agreements, which have proven challenging to sign and even more difficult to implement, will need to be revisited, since deportations are likely to be central to any strategy to deter migrants without a solid claim for asylum. On a different topic, the potential of development assistance to influence irregular migration flows might be explored through targeted analysis of particular communities and locations where concentrated action might address the European Union's development and migration interests simultaneously.

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Here is a list of capabilities that need to be coordinated to effectively limit clandestine maritime crossings to Europe: high-level policy direction, investigations, intelligence gathering and sharing, on-water surveillance and interdiction, third-country legal reform to outlaw migrant smuggling, the development of legal and law enforcement capacity in third countries, cooperation with third-country law enforcement, communications campaigns, field research, diplomacy, returns agreements, deportations, and more capable asylum and resettlement management in third countries.

The length and complexity of this list points to the high value of a centrally coordinated mission or authority. All such endeavors must be prioritised by their possible impact on the decisions of migrants and smugglers. Migrants and smugglers are demonstrating energy, initiative, and innovation in meeting their goals. Their dedication and coordination could serve as inspiration. At a minimum, understanding their perspective is necessary to inform an appropriate response.

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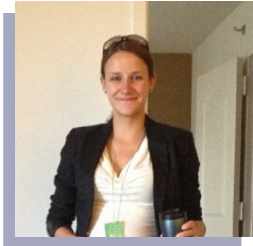
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