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Beyond Crisis Management

The Path Towards an Effective, Pro-active and Fair European Refugee Policy

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Europe urgently needs an effective, pro-active and fair refugee policy. Short-sighted policy-making and a narrow focus on what seemed to be in the immediate national interests have led to a conglomerate of European refugee policies. These policies are clearly ineffective and resulted in a large and partially uncontrolled refugee movement to and within Europe in 2015. Refugee flows to Europe are unlikely to subside soon, as many conflicts persist and the average duration of protracted refugee situations worldwide is on the rise. In a reaction to these circumstances, the European Commission has proposed a number of initiatives to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Consensus is more likely on the introduction of restrictions and sanctions rather than, for example, fair distribution systems or pooling sovereignty on the EU level by establishing a strong EU Agency of Asylum. Yet, especially pro-active solutions that meet Europe's humanitarian responsibilities are necessary.

The paper puts forward policy recommendations for a paradigm-shift from reactive to pro-active refugee policies. The overarching objective is to create further legal channels for refugees to seek protection in Europe. Measures include both national and EU-policies and are supposed to pave the way to a sustainable and coherent European refugee policy. The policy recommendations are clustered in five overarching themes: create safe passages to protection, improve national asylum processing and integration systems, establish further legal pathways for mixed migration, enable protection in the region of origin, and tackle the root causes of forced migration through a sustainable foreign, economic and trade policy. Finally, it has to be stressed that only if we can restore Europe's political will to manage refugee flows together, there will be sustainable solutions in sight. Regular dialogue taking into account the different resources and histories of the countries are the way forward. If member states can incrementally align their different national policies, a comprehensive European refugee policy may follow. Given the current political differences amongst member states, this will be a lengthy process – but certainly worth the effort.

Project

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