

1 Introduction

The new European Commission, like its predecessor, faces interrelated challenges in the areas of border management, irregular immigration to the EU, and asylum policy—all set within the larger context of EU relations with migrants' countries of origin in the European neighborhood and beyond. Although far fewer irregular immigrants are entering EU territory now than in 2015, this is in part the result of EU policies and practices in border management that may not be sustainable without significant additional effort (e.g., the EU-Turkey agreement) or may even be incompatible with humanitarian standards (e.g., the treatment of irregular migrants at some national borders in the Western Balkans).

Hence, the challenge remains of designing policies for border management and asylum that align with humanitarian principles, enjoy the support of European voters, and lead to a fair sharing of responsibility for refugee protection among EU member states and with host countries in the rest of the world. In this 2019 MEDAM Assessment Report, we identify and discuss key insights from our research and dialogue with stakeholders since 2016 to inform the design of policies under the new Commission. We emphasize the interdependence of policies in areas as seemingly separate as border management and refugee integration in low- and middle-income countries. Above all, we explain how cooperation with migrants' countries of origin and transit in different policy areas is key to effective and humane policies on asylum and immigration and on border management.

A process of rethinking asylum and migration policies in Europe must begin with conversations on a wide range of migration-related policies among stakeholders in Europe and, equally, in countries of origin and transit, especially in the European neighborhood and in Africa. The European Commission plays a key role in the design of many relevant policies and is therefore well placed to advance the debate. The insights that we present in this Assessment Report demonstrate how the current impasse in EU asylum and migration policies can be overcome and how politically sustainable, humane, and effective policies can be developed. In this process, while our 'insights' suggest directions, actual policies will be shaped by conversations and negotiations among stakeholders.

In this Assessment Report, we address three broad topics. First, what asylum and refugee policies do Eu-

ropean voters want? Specifically, does the rise of right-wing, anti-asylum, anti-immigration parties in several EU countries indicate a broad shift by the EU population toward more skeptical attitudes on immigration and asylum? We paint a more nuanced picture that indicates a broad popular desire for state authorities to be able to control borders and the inflow of migrants, but also support for carefully regulated refugee protection (section 2).

Second, we discuss how control over the external EU border and immigration can only be exercised in close cooperation with countries of origin and transit (section 3). At the same time, it is often not in the economic or political interest of countries of origin and transit to help the EU restrict irregular migration—neither at the economy-wide and nor at the individual level. In the absence of legal migration opportunities, irregular migration may be better than no migration at all for migrants, the recipients of their remittances, and countries of origin. To address this conundrum, we discuss possible elements of a comprehensive approach to cooperation, which would extend not only to border management and the return and readmission of non-EU citizens who have no right to remain in Europe, but also to support for refugees in low- and middle-income countries, development assistance, and legal employment opportunities in the EU. We emphasize that effective cooperation must start by listening to the concerns of stakeholders in countries of origin and transit, and then jointly developing policy packages that benefit all parties and are therefore 'self-enforcing.'

Third, attempts to impose cooperation among EU member states on asylum and other migration-related policies by majority vote have failed in the past and, in our view, are unlikely to succeed in the future. Yet, refugee protection is in important ways a public good at the EU level and requires coordinated actions by the Commission and member states to be effective. We discuss how the new European Commission can make a fresh start on the long-standing legislative reforms of the European asylum system; how common actions in asylum and migration policy should be costed in the 2021–27 Multiannual Financial Framework; and how a monitoring system for member states' contributions to asylum policy can help to combine the necessary flexibility for member states regarding their contributions with the fundamental need for responsibility sharing and solidarity (section 4).