

International Relations**LAMPEDUSA TRAGEDY FROM OCTOBER 2013 AND THE EUROPEAN UNION RESPONSE: MORE ACCESSIBLE OR MORE RESTRICTIVE MIGRATION POLICIES?**

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ABSTRACT: *THE MEDITERRANEAN CRISES CAUSED BY MASSIVE IMMIGRATION IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE DYING IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION EVERY YEAR. THIS RESEARCH AIMS TO EMPHASIZE THE AMPLITUDE OF THE PROBLEM BY ANALYZING THE LAMPEDUSA TRAGEDY FROM 3RD OF OCTOBER 2013 AND THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RESPONSE. THE RESULTS OF THIS PAPER SHOW THAT IT IS MANDATORY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION TO ELABORATE A COMMON POLICY FOR MIGRATION AND ASYLUM AND TO IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM OF PROPORTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANTS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION'S MEMBER STATES.*

KEY WORDS: MEDITERRANEAN CRISES, CHALLENGE, LAMPEDUSA TRAGEDY, COMMON POLICY FOR MIGRATION.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is one of the greatest challenges of the European Union at the beginning of this century, the Mediterranean crisis becoming increasingly prominent. The actuality of this thematic approach is emphasized by the many shipwrecks and incidents in the Mediterranean Sea, only on the 13th and 14th of April 2015 2,800 immigrants being rescued from near the Italian coasts, and in the first week of the same month 2,000 other lives were rescued³. Nevertheless, due to the tragic events of April this year, (more exactly, the incidents taking place on the 13th ⁴, 16th ⁵, 19th ⁶ and the 20th ⁷ of April), the number of immigrant deaths in

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³ International Organization for Migration, *IOM Applauds Italy's Weekend Rescue at Sea of 2,800 Migrants*, 13th of April 2015, <http://www.iom.int/news/iom-applauds-italys-weekend-rescue-sea-2800-migrants>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁴ Steve Scherer, Gavin Jones, *400 migrants die in shipwreck off Libya, survivors say*, 14th of April 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/14/us-italy-migrant-shipwreck-idUSKBN0N51Y120150414>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁵ Middle East Eye, *At least 41 drown off Libyan Coast*, 16th of April 2015, <http://www.middleeye.net/news/least-41-drown-libya-coast-1548533658>, accessed on 17.04.2015.

2015 has exceeded 900, while in the first four months of the last year there were registered 96 fatalities, which is about 10 times fewer⁸. Numerous shipwrecks of boats carrying immigrants have also occurred in May this year, of which we shall mention only the incidents on the 3rd⁹, 5th¹⁰ and 29th¹¹ of May. All these events only serve to highlight the worsening crisis in the Euro-Mediterranean region and the necessity to take concrete and effective actions to address it properly, the need of a united position of the EU member states against this challenge and the development of a common policy on migration being a *sine qua non* phase to reduce the high number of deaths in the Mediterranean. According to statistics, in the last 25 years, over 19,000 immigrants who fled from the North African ports have died in the Mediterranean trying to reach Italy, and many more have probably lost their lives in shipwrecks or unknown circumstances, which only points to the fact that the real number of illegal immigration's victims is much higher¹².

Since illegal immigration has some negative effects upon the stability of European societies, both economically as well as politically, socially and culturally, measures must be taken to limit this phenomenon, as the European Union has above all, the obligation to ensure the welfare and security of its own citizens. But on the other hand, by its own law and principles, the European Union committed itself to defending human rights everywhere, the European institution being thus currently put in the difficult situation of finding a balance between ensuring security and stability for the European societies on the one hand and on the other, complying with the commitment to protect and promote human rights and, implicitly, to provide international protection to the vulnerable and disadvantaged ones.

This research aims to highlight the paradox of migration from third countries into the EU. The European Union must act carefully, taking into account its geographical limits and the actual capabilities of the member states, without endangering the stability of the European societies. In this respect, this paper tries to emphasize the importance of an effective management of migration in Europe, the development of a coherent and consistent response to the migration flows from third countries being imperative. The large number of immigrants and refugees trying to illegally enter the Union, along with the increasing incidence of accidents involving the loss of thousands of lives annually (in the Mediterranean) reveals the

⁶ The UN Refugee Agency, *Mediterranean Boat Capsizing: deadliest incident on record*, 21st of April 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=553652699&query=catania>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁷ Jack Simpson, *Three reported dead as new footage emerges of migrants being rescued off Greek island of Rhodes*, 20th of April 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/three-reported-dead-as-new-footage-emerges-of-migrants-being-rescued-off-greek-island-of-rhodes-10189556.html>, accessed on 17.06.2015; *An Unending Refugee Tragedy: Europe's Path to Deadly Partition*, 24th of April 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/eu-policies-worsen-an-already-deadly-situation-for-immigrants-a-1030550.html>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁸ International Organization for Migration, *Migrant Deaths Soar in Mediterranean*, 17th of April 2015, <http://www.iom.int/news/migrant-deaths-soar-mediterranean>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁹ *Immigrati, oltre 3.500 in arrivo Almeno una decina i morti in Libia*, 3rd of June 2015, http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/cronaca/sicilia/immigrati-oltre-3-500-in-arrivo-almeno-una-decina-i-morti-in-libia_2109151-201502a.shtml, accessed on 17.05.2015.

¹⁰ Jim Yardley, Elisabetta Povoledo, *Mediterranean Shipwreck Kills 40 Before a Rescue*, 5th of May 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/06/world/europe/italy-migrants-mediterranean-sinking.html?_r=0, accessed on 17.06.2015.

¹¹ *La Marina recupera 17 cadaveri al largo della Libia. Salvati 217 migranti*, 29th of May 2015, http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2015-05-29/recuperati-17-cadaveri-gommono-largo-libia-marina-salva-217-migranti-212842.shtml?uuid=ABaJrEpD&refresh_ce, accessed on 17.06.2015.

¹² Steve Scherer, Wladimir Pantaleone, *Search for victims of Sicily migrant wreck postponed*, 4th of October 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/04/us-italy-migrants-idUSBRE9920AX20131004>, accessed on 22.02.2015.

great importance of this matter. The tragedy of Lampedusa from October 3rd 2013 is a notorious example in this respect, one of the main objectives of this research being the assessment of not only the event in which 366 immigrants lost their lives, but also the reactions of the European Union and the Member States, with focus on the policies and actions initiated as a result of the shipwreck that occurred near the small Sicilian island.

To empirically prove the importance of developing coherent migration and asylum policies, as well as to highlight the magnitude of illegal migration flows, we resorted to the case study method, considering that the tragedy of Lampedusa in October 2013 will clearly illustrate the complexity of the situation, which both the European Union and the African immigrants are facing. Of course, we have also used other scientific methods, such as the descriptive method, the comparative analysis or the study and interpretation of statistical data.

1. THE TRAGEDY OF LAMPEDUSA FROM OCTOBER 3RD 2013

On the 3rd of October 2013, an overcrowded boat carrying over 500 immigrants sank near the Italian island of Lampedusa. The immigrants came from Somalia and Eritrea, highly unstable areas of conflict, the two regimes being internationally recognized for frequent and persistent abuses against human rights. Following the shipwreck, 366 immigrants lost their lives and only 155 managed to survive¹³, among which 145 men, 6 women and 4 children¹⁴.

The rickety old boat left the Misrata port (Libya)¹⁵ and had the Sicilian island, Lampedusa, as destination. Because the engine of the boat ceased to operate at approximately 800 metres from the shore¹⁶ and the water began to flood the vessel, the (Tunisian) captain and the immigrants tried to draw the attention of the nearby fishing boats using blazing blankets and clothes, hoping that someone will see the flames and come to their aid¹⁷. Shortly after however, due to the signaling flames, a fire broke aboard and panic spread across the entire boat which started to sink around 4 am¹⁸. Unfortunately, most of the immigrants could not swim, their fates being thus sealed.

The tragedy of Lampedusa on October 3rd 2013 and the immigrants' desperate attempts to fight for a better life, even with the risk for their dreams to be scattered and buried in the Mediterranean has sensitized both the Italian and the European populations. Despite the fact that various actions within the Union were implemented to significantly reduce such unfortunate events, the EU have failed to formulate a common policy on migration.

¹³ Juliane von Mittelstaedt, Maximilian Popp, 'Aren't We Human Beings?': *One Year After the Lampedusa Refugee Tragedy*, 9th of October 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/lampedusa-survivors-one-year-after-the-refugee-tragedy-a-994887.html>, accessed on 21.02.2015.

¹⁴ Livia Borghese, Hada Messia, Laura Smith-Park, *Italy mourns more than 100 migrants killed in Lampedusa shipwreck*, 4th of October 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/04/world/europe/italy-migrant-boat-sinks/index.html>, accessed on 21.02.2015.

¹⁵ *An Unending Refugee Tragedy: Europe's Path to Deadly Partition*, 24th of April 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/eu-policies-worsen-an-already-deadly-situation-for-immigrants-a-1030550.html>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

¹⁶ Juliane von Mittelstaedt, Maximilian Popp, 'Aren't We Human Beings?': *One Year After the Lampedusa Refugee Tragedy*, 9th of October 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/lampedusa-survivors-one-year-after-the-refugee-tragedy-a-994887.html>, accessed on 21.02.2015.

¹⁷ BBC News, *Italy boat sinking: Hundreds feared dead off Lampedusa*, 3rd of October 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24380247>, accessed on 23.02.2015.

¹⁸ Sarah Stillman, *Lampedusa's migrant tragedy, and ours*, 10th of October 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/lampedusas-migrant-tragedy-and-ours>, accessed on 21.02.2015.

2. EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRAGEDY

Ensuring the balance between security within the European Union and the security of citizens from third countries seeking support from the EU member states is a delicate subject that always raises difficulties for the policy makers. Still, the successive tragedies near the island of Lampedusa from October 3rd and 11th imposed the quick identification and implementation of concrete measures to reduce illegal immigration and the much too high number of casualties. In this respect, official meetings of the European leaders were held, major operations were developed in the Mediterranean and even new institutions and instruments for migration management were founded.

Following the Mediterranean tragedies, a series of meetings and reunions of the political leaders took place in the European Union, where they expressed their profound regret about the unfortunate events that occurred near the Italian island of Lampedusa. During these official meetings, the European specialists have analyzed the situation and made considerable efforts to search for the most efficient solutions. In the regard, we may mention the fact that, at the Foreign Affairs Council of November 18th 2013, the issues of the crisis caused in the Mediterranean by illegal immigration was raised and new “ways of strengthening political dialogue and cooperation with third countries”¹⁹ were proposed and examined in order to prevent such future tragedies. There had also been other meetings at European level, for instance the meeting of the European Parliament of October 23rd 2013, the European Council in Brussels on October 24th - 25th 2013 or the European Council in Brussels on December 19th – 20th 2013, which all took into discussion the issue of immigration.

One of the European Union’s first initiatives targeted the creation of the **Task Force Mediterranean**. The decision of creating this instrument was taken shortly after the tragedy in the Sicilian island, during the Justice and Home Affairs Council on October 7th and 8th 2013. The Task Force would be led and chaired by the European Commission²⁰ and was intended “to identify, in the short term, concrete actions to ensure more efficient use of existing policies and tools, in particular as regards cooperation with countries of origin and transit, FRONTEX activities and the fight against trafficking and smuggling”²¹ of immigrants in the EU.

The European Border Surveillance System, known as EUROSUR, is also one of the main practical instruments developed by the European Union as a result of the tragedy of Lampedusa on October 3rd 2013²². It should be mentioned from the beginning that EUROSUR would not only focus on the surveillance of the Mediterranean shores, but of all external borders of the European Union. Although there have been several proposals for the

¹⁹ Council of the European Union, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean*, Bruxelles, 4th of December 2013, p. 2, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20131204_communication_on_the_work_of_the_task_force_mediterranean_en.pdf, accessed on 10.03.2015.

²⁰ European Commission – Press Release, *Lampedusa follow up: concrete actions to prevent loss of life in the Mediterranean and better address migratory and asylum flows*, Bruxelles, 4th of December 2013, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1199_en.htm, accessed on 10.03.2015.

²¹ Council of the European Union, *Report to the European Parliament and national Parliaments on the proceedings of the Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security for the period from January 2013 - June 2014*, Bruxelles, 17th of October 2014, p. 18, http://www.cdep.ro/afaceri_europene/CE/2014/ST14440.RO14.PDF, accessed on 10.03.2015.

²² Parlement Européen, *Communiqué de presse – Surveillance des frontières de l’UE: les députés approuvent les règles de fonctionnement d’EUROSUR*, 10th of December 2013, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/news-room/content/20131007IPR21624/html/Surveillance-des-fronti%C3%A8res-de-l%27UE-adoption-du-syst%C3%A8me-EUROSUR>, accessed on 12.03.2015.

development of such a system long before the Lampedusa incident occurred, it has accelerated the efforts of the European specialists to put into practice the projects discussed since 2006. Hence, through Regulation no. 1052/2013 of the European Parliament and Council from the 22nd of October 2013, the European Border Surveillance System was created and has become operational on the 2nd of December 2013. It is an essential instrument to reduce the loss of human lives around the European shores, as well as to reduce drugs and people trafficking.

Taking into account the real causes of intense emigrations from Africa, the European Union resorted to the implementation in 2014 of a **Pan-African Programme**, destined to ensure a sustainable development of the entire African continent²³. In the tense context of the increasingly frequent tragedies in the Mediterranean, which have as protagonists African immigrants, the European Union created this financial instrument in order to implement the *Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, whose main goal was to increase strategic cooperation between the two entities. The Programme is supported by the *EU's Development Cooperation Instrument*, with a budget of about 845 million euros for the period 2014-2020²⁴.

One of the most important measures of reducing Mediterranean crisis was launching **Operation Mare Nostrum**. It was started on the Italian government's initiative on October 18th 2013²⁵, after two successive tragedies in which over 600 immigrants lost their lives²⁶ occurred in the territorial waters of Italy: first, the tragedy of Lampedusa on October 3rd and, only a few days later, on October 11th ²⁷, a second incident, resulted in 268 dead Syrian refugees²⁸. Based on these events, the decision to launch Operation Mare Nostrum was taken in order to start search and rescue missions of immigrant vessels in distress, the operations being carried out in *international waters* as well, not only in the Italian ones²⁹. During this operation, the Italian Navy conducted 421 missions, saved 150,810 immigrants and 330 traffickers were brought to justice³⁰. In the second half of 2014, it was obvious to all European leaders that Italy could no longer financially cope with Operation Mare Nostrum³¹. As a result, at the end of October 2014, Italy ceased the operation that had a budget of

²³ European Commission, *Press Release – EU launches new programme to support Africa's continental integration*, Brussels, 6th of August 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-908_en.htm, accessed on 20.03.2015.

²⁴ European Commission, *Pan-African Programme*, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/pan-african-programme_en, accessed on 20.03.2015.

²⁵ *Mare Nostrum Operation*, <http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>, accessed on 6.03.2015; European Commission, *Memo – Frontex Joint Operation 'Triton' – Concerted efforts to manage migration in the Central Mediterranean*, Brussels, 7th of October 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-566_en.htm, accessed on 08.03.2015.

²⁶ Lizzie Davies, Arthur Neslen, „Italy: end of ongoing sea rescue mission ‘puts thousands at risk’”, 31st of October 2014, in *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/31/italy-sea-mission-thousands-risk>, accessed on 9.03.2015.

²⁷ *Peste 150.000 de imigranți au fost salvați grație operațiunii "Mare Nostrum" (Over 150.000 immigrants were saved thanks to Mare Nostrum Operation)*, 18th of October 2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/externe/2014/10/18/peste-150-000-de-imigranti-au-fost-salvati-gratie-operatiunii-mare-nostrum--13-02-18/>, accessed on 8.03.2015.

²⁸ The UN Refugee Agency, *Eritrean survivor of Lampedusa tragedy returns to honour the dead, meet Pope Francis*, 2nd of October 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/542d0ece5.html>, accessed on 24.02.2015.

²⁹ Ye Ming, *Lampedusa Shipwreck: From the Depths of the Mediterranean Sea*, 18th of November 2014, <http://time.com/3594604/lampedusa-shipwreck-from-the-depths-of-the-mediterranean-sea/>, accessed on 24.02.2015.

³⁰ *Mare Nostrum Operation*, <http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>, accessed on 6.03.2015.

³¹ European Commission, *Statement by Commissioner Malmström after the meeting with Italian Interior Minister Alfano*, Brussels, 27th of August 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-259_en.htm, accessed on 8.03.2015.

approximately nine million Euros/month, which was undoubtedly a significant financial effort (to which the European Union also contributed with 1.8 million euros)³².

In the light of the difficulties that Italy was facing in supporting Mare Nostrum, the Italian leaders made numerous appeals to the European Union for assistance. Therefore, the Union's specialists have taken initiative of drafting a European project and issued multiple requests for the participation of all member states to this project, in order to support the countries in South Europe against the influx of immigrants, as this was a European issue *par excellence* and not just a national one. Consequently, the EU Member States have made considerable efforts towards implementing a new operation developed by Frontex, aiming to support South Europe states in their endeavors to cope with the migration from third countries. In developing the new instrument, two major projects of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Border (Frontex), namely Hermes and Aeneas would significantly expand their tasks and merge into a single operation³³, whose level of coordination and efficiency would increase significantly. The European Union has thus taken the responsibility of launching a major action, which (this time) would not imply search and rescue missions, as in the case of Operation Mare Nostrum, but *border control missions*. The European initiative would be called **Triton** or **Frontex Plus**³⁴ and its missions solely targeted territorial waters of the EU member states, the operation being therefore carried out only around the European coasts, using a relatively small number of vessels and personnel³⁵. Triton will operate with only 65 officers (a greatly reduced team, as compared to the 900 people activating in Operation Mare Nostrum³⁶) and four aircrafts, one helicopter and 6 vessels, the budget being set at 2.9 million euros /month³⁷. In comparison to the Italian operation which covered 70,000 km² in the Mediterranean, Triton will not go further than 30 miles off the European shores³⁸.

CONCLUSIONS

Illegal immigration, especially from North African countries, is one of the greatest challenges the European Union now faces³⁹. In the present, the management of migration flows is not the most efficient, many tragedies and shipwrecks having occurred in the Mediterranean, resulting in thousands of deaths every year. One of the striking examples of this situation is the tragedy of October 3rd 2013 near Lampedusa island, but the list of

³² European Commission, *Fact Sheet – Questions and Answers: Smuggling of Migrants in Europe and the EU response*, Brussels, 13th of January 2015, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-3261_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-3261_en.htm), accessed on 8.03.2015.

³³ European Commission, *Statement by Commissioner Malmström after the meeting with Italian Interior Minister Alfano*, Brussels, 27th of August 2014, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release STATEMENT-14-259_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-259_en.htm), accessed on 8.03.2015.

³⁴ Amnesty International, *Italy: Ending Mare Nostrum search and rescue operation would 'put lives at risk'*, 17th of October 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2014/10/italy-ending-mare-nostrum-search-and-rescue-operation-would-put-lives-risk/>, accessed on 8.03.2015.

³⁵ BBC News, *Hundreds of migrants killed in the Mediterranean tragedy, says UN*, 11th of February 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31414009>, accessed on 28.02.2015.

³⁶ Lizzie Davies, Arthur Neslen, „Italy: end of ongoing sea rescue mission 'puts thousands at risk'”, 31st of October 2014, in *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/31/italy-sea-mission-thousands-risk>, accessed on 9.03.2015.

³⁷ European Commission, *Memo – Frontex Joint Operation 'Triton' – Concerted Efforts for managing migrator flows in the Central Mediterranean*, 31st of October 2014, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-14-609_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-609_en.htm), accessed on 8.03.2015.

³⁸ Lizzie Davies, Arthur Neslen, *Italy: end of ongoing sea rescue mission...*

³⁹ Adrian Liviu Ivan, *Sub zodia „Statelor Unite ale Europei”: de la ideea europeană la Comunitățile Economice Europene (Under the sign of the United States of Europe: from the European idea to the European Economic Communities)*, Cluj-Napoca, CA Publishing, 2009, p. 17.

shipwrecks with hundreds of victims can go on, the most recent being the sinking of a vessel carrying 700 immigrants on April 19th 2015⁴⁰.

Following the tragedy of October 3rd 2013 multiple major operations were launched in the Mediterranean, such as Mare Nostrum and Triton, new financial instruments were developed (e.g. the Pan-African Programme), and also, institutions specializing in the Mediterranean crisis were created (for example, Task Force Mediterranean). However, despite all the efforts of the European Union and its member states, such tragedies continue to occur even two years after the incident in October 3rd 2013, the saddest aspect being the fact that, due to the inefficiency of instruments created and due to the lack of unity and solidarity between the EU Member States, the number of victims remains high or, we could say that even greater tragedies are occurring, the one of April 19th 2015 being not only the most recent one but also the one with the largest number of victims⁴¹.

Taking into account the principle of solidarity and the fact that Lampedusa is not only the border of Italy, but of Europe as well, we state with complete certainty that formulating an European unified and coherent response to the challenge of migration is absolutely necessary, particularly to limit losses of lives in the Mediterranean and to significantly reduce illegal immigration. The Mediterranean crisis is, or should be, an absolute priority on the European agenda, all Member States (including those in the Centre and Northern Europe) having the moral obligation, based on common European values and principles, to support the Southern European states in their effort to fight illegal immigration from African countries and not to allow pressure from migration flows to be felt only by the states at the southern border of the EU. It is a certainty that the security and stability of all EU states depend on the security of the states found at the external EU borders. Based on this reasoning, it is necessary for more than only one third of the EU states to deal with immigrants and asylum seekers' management, more precisely, *each* member state must assume certain responsibilities, given that nowadays there are huge discrepancies: Italy, Malta, Germany, France, Spain, Greece or the UK have a number of immigrants several times greater than the other states. In this respect, we can recall the remarkable initiative of the European Commission's President, Jean-Claude Juncker, regarding the redistribution of immigrants⁴² arrived in the Union based on well-defined quotas⁴³, which take into account each country's GDP, the number of immigrants it already accommodates, unemployment and other such criteria, according to which it can be accurately determined how many more immigrants that state is able to host. Unfortunately, Juncker's plan met a strong opposition from certain states (among which Hungary), along with the refusal of the European People's Party (the largest in the European Union) to accept such an initiative.

⁴⁰ BBC News, *Mediterranean migrants: Hundreds feared dead after boat capsizes*, 19th of April 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32371348>, accessed on 9.05.2015.

⁴¹ Patrick Kingsley, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, „700 migrants feared dead in Mediterranean shipwreck”, 19th of April 2015, in *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/19/700-migrants-feared-dead-mediterranean-shipwreck-worst-yet?CMP=share_btn_fb, accessed on 25.05.2015.

⁴² *European schemes for relocation and resettlement*, pp. 19-22, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_annex_en.pdf, accessed on 17.06.2015; European Commission, *Resettlement and Relocation*, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/relocation_and_resettlement_factsheet_en.pdf, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁴³ Agerpres, *Planul lui Juncker de repartizare a imigranților ilegali pe cote între statele UE divizează blocul comunitar (Juncker's plan of allocating illegal immigrants in the European Union's Member States according to quota splits the community block)*, 11th of May 2015, <http://www.agerpres.ro/externe/2015/05/11/planul-lui-juncker-de-repartizare-a-imigrantilor-ilegali-pe-cote-intre-statele-ue-divizeaza-blocul-comunitar-17-03-09>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

It was often speculated that what happened in Lampedusa in October 2013 was an accident. It should be noted that for years, the same scenarios have been repeated endlessly. According to evidence, since the late 80s, approximately 20,000 immigrants have lost their lives trying to reach the European continent, the Mediterranean marking the end of countless lives⁴⁴. Even in the week preceding the tragedy of Lampedusa, the Coast Guard rescued a boat carrying 398 Syrian refugees who had fled from Tunisia towards the Sicilian island⁴⁵ and approximately two years after the tragedy of October 3rd 2013, more precisely on April 19th 2015, a boat with 700 immigrants sank, the number of victims being simply appalling⁴⁶. Therefore, these incidents are not at all exceptional⁴⁷: an *accident* does not occur on a yearly basis, day by day or week by week, more or less developing the same scenario, comprising the same actors (immigrants from all over Africa) and evolving under the same precarious conditions (transportation in overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels, carrying undocumented emigrants who illegally try to reach the European continent, almost always with the help of human traffickers).

Indeed, much of the blame belongs to the human traffickers who are remarkably increasing their activity during summer, taking advantage of the relatively calm waters and the desperate needs of immigrants, but the responsibility for the loss of hundreds or even thousands lives is not entirely theirs. Embarking immigrants in the vessels owned by traffickers is only an effect of a much deeper issue. Trying to grasp the big picture, we have noticed that these immigrants, who risk their lives travelling on extremely dangerous routes towards Europe, pay the traffickers a price that exceeds a few times the price of a plane or a ferryboat ticket (which could ensure a much safer journey towards Europe). What proves to be highly important in this respect is the regional context from the immigrants' origin countries, the African states being *par excellence* authoritarian regimes that clearly refuse to ensure passports or visas easily – oppressive regimes are not willing to provide their citizens the legal means to leave the country. It is a fact also that the EU's legal entry requirements are often much too high for the African refugees. A more severe sanctioning of traffickers or the investment of huge amounts of money in search and rescue operations (even if necessary) are solely solutions for the short-term, because these are actions that address only the *effects* caused by much more complex issues. As long as only the effects are dealt with and not *the real causes*, such type of *accidents* will continue to happen over and over again, ending the lives of more people who are, after all, innocent.

Still, ensuring accessible entry ways in Europe and allowing the immigration of thousands of Africans must be undertaken in full compliance with the *real possibilities* of the continent. In this respect, we must not overlook the *limited capacity of the EU* (limited from all points of view, from the geographic area to the restricted economic and social resources),

⁴⁴ Vittorio Longhi, *The Lampedusa boat sinking was no accident*, 4th of October 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/04/lampedusa-boat-sinking-no-accident-eu-migrants#comments>, accessed on 22.02.2015.

⁴⁵ Livia Borghese, Hada Messia, Laura Smith-Park, *Italy mourns more than 100 migrants killed in Lampedusa shipwreck*, 4th of October 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/04/world/europe/italy-migrant-boat-sinks/index.html>, accessed on 22.02.2015.

⁴⁶ Antonio Denti, *Hundreds drown off Libya, EU leaders forced to reconsider migrant crisis*, 19th of April 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/19/us-europe-migrants-idUSKBN0NA07020150419>, accessed on 9.05.2015.

⁴⁷ Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo, Henk van Houtum, „The Deadly EU Border Control”, in *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, vol. 13, nr. 2, 2014, pp. 295-297, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&sid=59f8fb4c-ece2-445a-8d6a-8acfc7d216e9%40sessionmgr114&hid=128>, accessed on 11.05.2015.

which is why it is a certainty that the Union and the member states will not be able to accommodate but a certain (relatively small) number of immigrants.

Eventually, we underline again the fact that migration is a European issue and not just a national one, which emphasizes the importance of formulating a common European policy in order to provide a general framework of action concerning migration waves.

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