

The political and social implications of managing the refugee crisis: European and Greek responses

Tramontanis Angelo
atramou@ekke.gr

Researcher, National Centre for Social Research (EKKE)
9 Kratinou & Athinas str
10552
Athens
Greece

With over 4 million people having been displaced by the conflict in Syria, this has been, in the words of the previous UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres, “the biggest refugee population from a single conflict in a generation”. At the same time, refugee numbers from African countries, such as Sudan and Libya, are rapidly increasing. Within 2015, European countries have been challenged by ever increasing numbers at their borders, and while some have accepted refugees in great numbers demonstrating a “welcome culture”; others have insisted on offering asylum only to Christian refugees.

Thus, after a year in which over one million refugees and migrants arrived on Europe’s shores, terrorist attacks that have brought again the “migration-security” nexus to prominence, and the Cologne attacks that have hardened attitudes towards migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the refugee crisis is becoming increasingly polarizing in the domestic politics of the European states. In dealing with a crisis that may pose an existential threat to the future of the European Union, and with EC President Jean-Claude Juncker calling for an urgent “European approach” to migration, the overall European response has instead been characterized by confusion and a lack of a universal policy. This paper will elaborate and discuss EU and national responses, while placing special emphasis on the Greek case, as the refugee crisis coincides with what seems like a perpetual economic crisis.