

HOTSPOTS AS A TASTELESS SOUP

If the hotspots created by the European Union for refugees are considered as a soup, how do the ingredients in this soup; refugees, local people, aid organizations, etc. come together in harmony? Does this soup allow different flavors to come together to create a rich flavor, or does it create a mixture where some ingredients are missing and therefore the soup is tasteless?

To answer these questions, let's first examine the European Commission's definition of "hotspot approach".



FROM DEFINITION TO CONTRAST

According to this definition which you can access from the link above, the main objectives of the "hotspot approach" are as follows: Provide a platform for EU agencies to intervene quickly and in an integrated manner in frontline Member States facing crises due to specific and disproportionate migratory pressures at their external borders. Assist Member States in managing mixed migratory flows and to help them cope with the challenges posed by high migratory pressures. Facilitate the swift identification, registration, and fingerprinting of incoming migrants, ensuring that those claiming asylum are channeled into appropriate procedures. Coordinate the return of irregular migrants who do not have the right to stay in the EU, including pre-return assistance and the organization of return flights. Improve coordination and cooperation among various EU agencies (such as Frontex, EASO, and Europol) and national authorities, thereby avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring a comprehensive response to the migratory challenges. Contribute to the implementation of relocation schemes established under EU law, thereby enhancing the overall response to migration challenges.



INGREDIENTS OF THIS SOUP



Overall, hotspots are designated areas at the EU's external borders that experience significant migration pressure. Hotspots are established to ensure that migrants and refugees arriving in Europe are quickly registered, their situations assessed and, if necessary, deported. These centers play a critical role in managing migration flows and securing Europe's external borders, especially in countries such as Greece and Italy. Hotspots act as a filtering mechanism to categorize new arrivals according to their potential status, which helps determine their eligibility for asylum or return procedures. Hotspots allow for the management of "mixed migration flows" by categorizing individuals as refugees or economic migrants.

All these explanations, which are part of the definition and operation, pave the way for criticism of hotspots, indicating that their primary function has shifted from providing protection to facilitating deportation, and that in addition to the national interests of states, the interests of non-state actors also play a role in this area.

The implementation of the hotspot approach, especially with the externalization policies that gained momentum after the 2016 EU-Turkey Deal that not only undermines the reputation of the Council of Europe but also leads to the criminalization of migrants, has led to the restriction of asylum seekers. This strategy aimed to process asylum claims in these places and to create a buffer zone restricting movement to the mainland and northern Europe, but the imposition of strict deadlines for applications, geographical restrictions that limit the ability of asylum seekers to move freely, and conditions that often lead to long-term detention in inadequate facilities have also led to many human rights violations. Likewise, living conditions for refugees have become a concern, with overcrowded camps and inadequate access to basic services such as healthcare, legal aid and translation.

As a result, it is possible to say that reception structures such as hotspots have been transformed into prisons, which has eliminated the right to asylum and has created a system that is against the principles that the Common European Asylum System aims to respect, and therefore, it is possible to say that there are missing ingredients in the soup.

In this case, we need to discuss in detail what is in the soup for hotspots. The basic needs such as housing, health, education and social support; the fundamental rights of refugees and asylum seekers such as the right to life, protection from torture and ill-treatment, the right to citizenship, the right to freedom of movement, the right to leave the country and return to the country and the right not to be forcibly returned; the support and services provided by humanitarian agencies and their capacity to respond to the needs of refugees; European Union and national policies on refugee management; the employment opportunities and economic integration of refugees; the social integration of refugees; the systems for accepting asylum seekers and legal procedures for acceptance. But when we look at the current situation, it is possible to see deficiencies in almost all these contents.

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The body charged with improving the way the EU spends its money says efforts to improve the situation for asylum seekers in Greece and Italy have largely failed. Migrants in the so-called hotspots continue to face years in limbo because of legal bottlenecks and poorly performing EU schemes.

The European Court of Auditors is urging the European Union to rethink its handling of the migrant situation in Greece and Italy, where asylum seekers typically spend years in limbo in inadequate accommodation before having their claim decided.

The document published by the EU body said that changes should happen now, before a new crisis. ECA member Leo Brincat said that this was the right moment "for stock-taking, putting the house in order, and even taking the necessary remedial action."

"It's better to take action at a time when there is no peaking of the migration crisis," Brincat said.

The study also found that the two EU agencies intended to assist Greece and Italy with the processing of migrants and the running of camps were failing their objectives, partly due to lacking support from EU member states.

Pia Oberoi, the UN Human Rights Office's Migration and Human Rights Advisor, had the opportunity to examine the hotspots during her visit to Italy. Explaining the hotspot conflict through her observations, Oberoi stated that it is understandable that rapid action should be taken in hotspots due to the density of incoming people, but that there is insufficient capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable people such as victims of sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, torture, and Ugh trauma.



Hotspots are often overcrowded. For example, there is a large difference between the capacity of hotspots in Greece and the number of refugees and asylum seekers available. This leads to deteriorating living conditions and difficulties in meeting basic needs. Refugees experience serious difficulties in terms of health services, housing, and basic needs. However, there is a lack of basic services such as appropriate housing, health services, and psychosocial support, especially for vulnerable groups, children and women.

Overcrowding and poor living conditions can cause tensions between the local population and refugees. This can lead to social unrest and protests. As a result, by demonizing refugees, it harms integration and can lead to an increase in protectionist policies by states in response to popular demand.

NO HELP WITHOUT INTEREST ?



The odyssey of the "Aquarius", a ship loaded with migrants, refused by Italy, not welcomed by France, finally taken by Spain... symbolizes Europe's difficulties in the face of the migration issue.

The increase in border controls and the construction of physical barriers by many EU Member States make it difficult for refugees to enter Europe, which restricts their right to seek asylum. The continued reliance on externalization and restrictive policies raises questions about the responsibilities of EU Member States to fulfil their obligations under international law.

Mass returns in hotspots without considering the individual circumstances of refugees constitute a violation of international law. This threatens the right of refugees to seek asylum in safety. In this context, the combination of peripheralization and externalization leads to a significant erosion of the right to asylum.



The involvement of organizations such as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the Frontex, and the Europol in the asylum process raises concerns about the adequacy of legal protections for applicants. The fragmented nature of the asylum procedure, where interviews cannot be conducted by qualified personnel, leads to a violation of the right to be heard and the right to a fair trial. In addition, the "nationality screening" process applied in hotspots is a form of discrimination that violates refugees' rights. This process leads to the classification of refugees based solely on their nationality, without considering their individual circumstances.

In conclusion, although hotspots are an important tool in Europe's migration management, they present serious problems in terms of human rights and living conditions and appear to be a tasteless soup.

If you want to elaborate on these, you can examine the disasters that occurred in hotspots in Spain this year and the situation in the region as examples of what migrants have experienced by clicking on the news on the side!



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