

The Disaster of European Refugee Policy

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*Perspectives from
the “Balkan Route”*

Edited by

Igor Ž. Žagar, Neža Kogovšek Šalamon
and Marina Lukšič Hacin

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INTRODUCTION

This volume was written in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis which tested the ability of the European states, governments and residents to receive and grant protection to people fleeing war and conflicts. The absence of a comprehensive and coordinated response on the level of the European Union, unilateral and self-centred responses of its individual Member States to the challenges posed by mass migration, and the rise of xenophobic and racist sentiments within populations as well as in political programmes all revealed the level of solidarity and hospitality problems that both the European Union and its Member States have in coping with migration challenges. Through these developments, it became clear how fragile the Schengen Area, the Common European Asylum System and even the sole concept of asylum are. The unwillingness of certain EU Member States to agree with the solidarity-based quota system or to implement this system raised fundamental questions of why some of them even aspired to the European Union membership—was it only for the money? Was it for better and worse, or was it really just for the better, i.e. for the benefits deriving from the EU membership?

Also, it became clear that the historical memory of lessons learned from the two world wars have been almost forgotten and also that the experience of certain nations with fleeing their states in the past definitely does not automatically mean that this same nation will feel the urgency to assist others who are on the move for similar reasons. This was particularly obvious from the explosion of online hate speech and also hate crimes, and very few European states managed to react to these developments on the policy, normative and even discursive level.

This collective volume is based on papers presented at three symposiums organised by three Slovenian research institutions—Education Research Institute, Slovenian Migration Institute of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts, and Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies. When the Western Balkans migration route moved south following the closure of the border by the Hungarian authorities, the developments, reactions to the crisis and institutional, political, and societal responses called to be addressed and analysed by the research community in Slovenia. Upon the initiative of the Education Research Institute, the three organisations decided to invite prominent Slovenian

researchers and academics to present their analyses of the situation from different perspectives. As a result, three symposiums were organised in 2016: on 12 January, 8 March 2016 and 14 April, where 28 scholars presented their analyses of the situation. Legal, political, sociological, discursive and anthropological aspects were discussed. The symposiums were well attended, each attracting close to a hundred participants. Based on their presentations, the conveners (who are also the editors of this volume) invited the speakers with the most interesting presentations to prepare written submissions for a collective volume you are reading now.

The volume is composed of twelve chapters. The introduction is followed by a detailed timeline of the developments that lead to the “refugee crisis” and reactions of states to the challenges that mass arrivals presented. Chapter One written by Neža Kogovšek Šalamon and Kaja Šeruga includes the key events and details the factual developments that led to the formation of the Western Balkans migration route and the manner in which it was managed by the states. It also addresses problems regarding the difference between facts and law, i.e. the difference between the legal framework defining how crossing of state borders and the procedures with irregular migrants and asylum seekers should be handled by the state authorities, and how they were handled in practice. It also clarifies that this was not necessarily unlawful as the international human rights law requires the states to address the situations where human rights of individuals within their jurisdiction could be at stake. In Chapter Two, Marina Lukšič Hacin discusses how to use the categorical apparatus of the migration studies, i.e. different terms that mark different categories of migrants and refugees, and, through this, how to understand reasons and decisions to migrate or flee in connection to the global socio-economic-political triangle of causality.

To draw parallels from historical experience, Petra Svoltjšak writes in Chapter Three about the lessons learned from the disintegration of multinational empires, World War I and the emergence of nation-states which lead to ten million refugees that flooded the European continent. In Chapter Four, Damir Josipović addresses the possible historical causes of migration in the Middle East. He defines most of the region as a “playground of superimposed boundaries”, which in combination with disastrous wars (World War I and the decline of the Ottoman Empire being of paramount importance), mostly for the geopolitical reasons, overpopulation and scarce sustenance resources on the one hand and abundant mineral and other natural resources, on the other hand, led to political instability and conflicting geo-strategic interests of regional powers.

In Chapter Five, Igor Ž. Žagar traces and explores a rich experience Republic of Slovenia has with refugees: from Croatian and Bosnian refugees from the 1990s, to refugees coming from different “hot spots” around the turn of the millennium, and finally to the current global crisis: a crisis that is not just a migrant crisis, but above all an economic, political, and ideological crisis. The purpose of the chapter is twofold. First, to present and reconstruct the populist-political imagery about refugees found in Slovenian “official” and “unofficial” media; imagery that often transforms into a bestiary of biblical proportions and references. Second, to show how demonising refugees in Slovenia is not a new phenomenon, but dates back to the very beginning, to the roots of the newly formed state.

To better understand the reactions to the “refugee crisis”, Veronika Bajt in Chapter Six focuses on the rising online racist anti-immigration and anti-Muslim attitudes and elucidates this rise from the perspective of the sociology of nationalism. She positions this particular Slovenian case in the wider European context of how the “refugee crisis” has been represented in the social media and how the political elite reacted (if at all) to these developments. The Chapter presents the phenomenon of online hate speech as a direct reflection of the broader collapse of the EU migration, integration and asylum policies.

In Chapter Seven, Vlasta Jalušič, by invoking the works of Arendt, Agamben, Rancière, Hegel, and others, discusses the bare life situation which the refugees are pushed into. She stresses that focusing on the refugee crisis and its resolving draws our attention away from the real problems, particularly the problem of exclusion of the refugees from the political community and the problem of their (lack of) right to have rights. She emphasizes that the states’ focus on restrictive measures, their claims that they have already done enough for the refugees and their messages that the interests of citizens have to be put first, are dangerously close to interpretations of rights and justice in the time of the National Socialist regime in Germany which based its ideology on the law being applicable only for the German people.

Mojca Pajnik writes in Chapter Eight that media models that are subordinated to the powers of the political and corporate elite are vulnerable to instrumentalisation for propaganda-like purposes. Importantly, she reminds that propaganda flourishes best in circumstances where politics have collapsed, where the distinction between politics and the police, between solidarity and order of repression vanishes. As possible reasons for this, she emphasises that “post-democracy” has produced the diminishing distinctions between political parties and encouraged the

merging of the left and the right into the political centre, which has the capacity to unite people in the *volks-gemeinschaft* that has in history fuelled exclusion and racism.

In Chapter Nine, Srečo Dragoš believes that all the given elements in the society point to the rise of authoritarianism. He demonstrates that with the spreading moral panic, encouraged by political elites, and high levels of public distrust towards core institutions of the state, with poverty on the rise and the disintegrating social state, the public opinion in Slovenia is gradually shifting towards authoritarianism, susceptible to “patriotic” sentiments and uncritical praise of Slovenia and Slovenians. Going further into the sphere of economy, Jože Mencinger in Chapter Ten addresses a fear of the European states that the refugees might pose a high economic burden on their resources. He shows that the yearly economic costs of three million immigrants would be only a good thousandth of the GDP of the European Union. To address their needs and simultaneously protect the economic health of the Union, he proposes to cover these costs by allocating for them one-third of the monthly amount of base money created by the European Central Bank.

In Chapter Eleven, Darij Zadnikar advocates the change of the epistemological perspective by including the voiceless and allowing for the abundance of their narratives. Such a social science would recuperate its emancipatory normative constituency and abandon regulative manipulation at the service of powerful institutions. Autonomous social initiatives, groups, and movements proved themselves capable of implementing this non-colonialist epistemological shift, where science emerges from-within of the researched “object”, attaining the face and the voice of people, and does not apply to them just another method of epistemicide.

Finally, Chapter Twelve authored by Tadej Troha aims to present the implications of institutional exclusion as manifested in the anti-immigrant discourse. The author argues that hostility towards immigrants is connected to economic, cultural and political segregation on different levels—from the European Union to the individual nation states. The research is based on the analysis of the Slovenian Identitarian movement, a right-wing youth group. The concept of “cultural racism” is used to explain their rejection of immigrants based on “cultural incompatibility”.

The editors of this volume trust that the presented chapters will provide an in-depth insight into the developments surrounding, causing and perpetuating the “refugee crisis”, encourage critical reflection, spark academic discussions and assist all those involved in the reflection about the “crisis” in sharing new ideas on how to deal with the migration challenges of the 21st century. Above all, the volume aims to contribute to

ideas that are based on solidarity, humanity, and hospitality towards the people on the move.

To conclude, we would especially like to thank Dean Zagorac, the copy editor of the volume, for his tireless efforts in the editing process of the volume, and Ana Mlekuž for her diligent secretarial work; without them, we would not be able to complete this volume.

Igor Ž. Žagar
Neža Kogovšek Šalamon
Marina Lukšič Hacin

TIMELINE OF THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS 2015–2016

KAJA ŠERUGA

- | | | |
|---------------|---------|---|
| 23 April 2015 | EU | The European Council holds an emergency meeting to discuss the migrant crisis. It agrees to triple funding for rescue operations aimed at migrant boats (operations <i>Triton</i> and <i>Poseidon</i>), and the several EU Member States promise more ships and other resources. It also agrees to look at ways to capture and destroy smugglers' boats before they can be launched, step up cooperation with Turkey and deploy immigration officers to non-EU countries. |
| 7 May 2015 | Germany | German Federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière announces in Berlin that 450,000 refugees are expected to arrive in Germany this year. |
| 13 May 2015 | EU | EC European Agenda on Migration confirms tripling the budget for operations <i>Triton</i> and <i>Poseidon</i> : 60 million euros for the front-line EU states; 30 million euros for Regional Development and Protection Programmes (Africa/Middle East). It also introduces a “Hotspot” approach, where EASO, Frontex, and Europol work with frontline Member States to identify, register, and fingerprint incoming migrants. It also proposes the relocation and resettlement under a quota scheme determined by GDP, size of the population, unemployment rate and past numbers of asylum seekers and resettled refugees. (Countries with large numbers of migrants and asylum applications, such as Italy, Malta, and Germany, support the proposal. Others, such as Hungary, Slovakia, and Estonia, oppose it. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán calls it “a crazy idea”.) |

27 May 2015	EU	The European Commission's first implementation package: emergency response mechanism to assist Italy and Greece; relocation of 40,000 refugees within the EU; resettlement of 20,000 refugees from outside Europe; action plan against migrant smuggling; guidelines on fingerprinting.
17 June 2015	Hungary	Hungary orders the closure of the border with Serbia and approves plans for a four-metre-high fence along Hungary's 175 kilometres border with Serbia. A year before, Hungary received more migrants per capita than any other EU country apart from Sweden, with the number shooting up to almost 43,000 people from just 2,000 in 2012. According to official data, 95 per cent cross from Serbia.
27 June 2015	The UK	The United Kingdom announces that it will begin building more than two miles of high-security fencing at the Channel Tunnel port in Calais, in an attempt to stop thousands of migrants breaking into lorries bound for Britain.
13 July 2015	Hungary	Hungary starts to erect a razor-wire fence along its border with Serbia. (Fence is completed and the border sealed on 15 September 2015.)
16 July 2015	Slovenia	The Slovenian government passes the "Contingency plan of the Republic of Slovenia to ensure the accommodation and supply in case of increased number of applicants for international protection" which plans for the long-term accommodation of a maximum of 900 people. The plan is set out in three phases which shall be activated if certain thresholds are passed.
20 July 2015	EU	The EU leaders agree to accept 32,256 refugees from Italy and Greece; this is just short of the 40,000 proposed in May by the EC president Jean-Claude Juncker.
4 August 2015	Bulgaria	Bulgaria begins building a new section of a razor-wire fence along its border with Turkey to stop migrants entering the country illegally. It is the final portion of the fence, of which construction began in November 2013 and will completely seal the border.

19 August 2015	Germany	The German Ministry of Interior revises the previous estimate (450,000 refugees) steeply upward, to 800,000, between May and August. The situations in Syria, northern Iraq, and Afghanistan deteriorate dramatically. Hundreds of boat refugees die. Greece is wholly consumed with its problems. An election campaign is taking place in Turkey. Both countries simply wave through vast numbers of refugees.
20–22 August 2015	Macedonia	Macedonia seals its southern border with Greece and declares a state of emergency to help it cope with a massive influx of migrants, as the numbers trying to enter Macedonia rise to more than 3,000 a day.
25 August 2015	Germany	The BAMF confirms via Twitter (in German): “We are at present largely no longer enforcing #Dublin procedures for Syrian citizens”, meaning that refugees from that country no longer have to be sent back to the first EU country that they entered. Neither Angela Merkel nor Chancellery Minister Peter Altmaier, her chief of staff, know about it.
31 August 2015	Germany	At the summer press conference, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declares “ <i>Wir schaffen das</i> ” (“We can do this”) regarding the accommodation of rising numbers of refugees. Merkel calls it a “national duty” to do so.
1 September 2015	Hungary	Hungary closes the central train station in Budapest (Keleti) and then refuses entry to anyone without legal ID papers due to the pressure from other EU countries to enforce EU law, which requires anyone who wishes to travel in the borderless Schengen zone to hold a valid passport and visa. The day before thousands of people who had been camped outside for weeks were suddenly allowed to leave for Austria and Germany without visa checks.
2 September 2015	Greece	Pictures of three-year-old Aylan al-Kurdi, drowned in his Syrian family’s attempt to reach Greece from Turkey, provoke a wave of public sympathy for refugees.
3 September 2015	Hungary	Budapest reopens its central train station after a two-day closure. Hundreds board trains for the Austrian border; others set off for Germany on foot. Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán says the crisis is a “German problem”.

4 September 2015	Hungary	More than 1,000 refugees in Hungary march out of Budapest towards the Austrian border in protest of the Hungarian government's refusal to provide trains to Austria and Germany. That decision is reversed overnight when buses are provided by the Hungarian authorities to take the exhausted refugees to the border where they are met by volunteers from the Austrian Red Cross and the Austrian Order of Malta holding handwritten signs saying "welcome", and handing out waterproof clothes, food, water, milk, and blankets.
5 September 2015	Germany	Germany (and Austria) start to take in refugees who are stuck in Hungary. 6,780 people arrive in Munich on trains, many of them from the large group that set off to walk from Budapest after days stranded at a train station in the Hungarian capital. After a long day's march, most are picked up by buses and taken to the border, but many arrive exhausted and ill. There are so many well-wishers at Munich's station that police had to push back barricades to give those arriving more space, and volunteers are turning away people with clothes to donate.
5 September 2015	Germany	German Chancellor Angela Merkel announces that there are "no limits on the number of asylum seekers" Germany will take in and continues: "As a strong, economically healthy country we have the strength to do what is necessary".
7 September 2015		British Prime Minister David Cameron will take in an extra 20,000 refugees over five years. France agrees to take 24,000. Germany earmarks 6 billion euros to help an expected 800,000 extra refugees.
8 September 2015	Hungary	Hundreds of migrants break through police lines at Hungary's border with Serbia and begin walking towards the capital, Budapest. The migrants earlier broke out of a registration camp at Röszke. Stones were thrown at officers, who responded with pepper spray. About 300 migrants run on to a nearby motorway, chanting "Germany, Germany". As darkness falls, they are walking, escorted by police, towards Budapest, 170 kilometres away.

8 September 2015	Hungary	Hungarian camerawoman Petra László is recorded kicking migrants who are fleeing police—the footage goes viral. László is fired after the footage of the incident spread in the media and online. In September 2016, László is indicted on charges of breach of peace.
9 September 2015	Denmark	Hundreds of migrants attempting to travel by train from Germany to Sweden are stopped by police when they enter Denmark. About 200 migrants refuse to leave the trains, while about 300 begin walking along the E45 motorway towards Sweden. Danish police are forced to close the motorway and suspend all rail links with Germany. The migrants do not want to be registered in Denmark because the government cut benefits for new arrivals and restricted the right to residency, while Sweden promised to issue residency papers to all Syrian asylum seekers.
9 September 2015	EU	The European Commission’s second implementation package: relocation of 120,000 refugees within Europe on a quota basis, bringing the total to 160,000 (the UK, which has an opt-out, is not included in these plans) + permanent crisis relocation mechanism; common list of safe countries of origin; more effective return policy, return handbook; external dimensions of the crisis: 1.8 billion euros Trust Fund for Africa.
12 September 2015		Tens of thousands take part in a “day of action”—demonstrations in support of refugees and migrants in several European cities. In London, tens of thousands, some carrying placards that read “Open the Borders” and “Refugees in”, march towards the Prime Minister’s residence. About 30,000 rally outside the Danish parliament in Copenhagen chanting “Say it loud and say it clear, refugees are welcome here”. Other rallies are held in Sweden, France, Austria, and the Netherlands. Meanwhile, thousands also take part in demonstrations against mass immigration in Warsaw, Prague, and Bratislava.
13 September 2015	Hungary	A record 5,809 people arrive in Hungary as its border fence nears completion.

13 September 2015	Germany	Germany introduces temporary controls on its border with Austria to cope with the inflow of migrants. Trains between Germany and Austria are suspended for 12 hours. Germany's vice-chancellor says the country is "at the limit of its capabilities" as more than 13,000 migrants arrived in Munich in one day, and 40,000 are expected to arrive in Germany over the following weekend.
14 September 2015	Austria	Austria introduces controls on its border with Hungary and deploys its army to the border to help cope with the inflow of migrants.
15 September 2015	Hungary	Hungary closes the border with Serbia and declares a state of emergency in two southern counties as new laws come into force to stop migrants entering illegally. The laws make it a crime to cross the border illegally and to damage the newly-built fence along the Hungary-Serbia border. A standoff occurs as hundreds of migrants are massed at the fence, some throwing down food and water in protest at not being allowed through. Shortly after, Hungary begins building a barrier along its border with Croatia.
15 September 2015	Balkan route	After Hungary closes its border with Serbia, the migration route turns towards Croatia and Slovenia. The first wave lasts for five days, during which around 3,600 refugees enter Slovenia.
16 September 2015	Hungary	Hundreds of migrants try to break through the fence on the Hungary-Serbia border at Horgoš and throw stones at Hungarian police. The latter responds with tear gas and a water cannon.
17 September 2015	Croatia	Croatia closes seven of its eight road border crossings with Serbia following a massive inflow of migrants. Officials say they have no choice after more than 13,000 entered the country since the Hungary-Serbia border was closed.
17 September 2015	Slovenia	Slovenia introduces temporary controls on its border with Hungary to cope with a potential inflow of migrants.
18 September 2015	Hungary	Hungary begins constructing a fence on its border with Croatia, first along a 41-kilometre stretch of the border where a river does not divide the two countries.

22 September 2015	EU	The EU interior ministers vote by a majority to relocate 120,000 refugees EU-wide. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia vote against the plan, but they are overruled. The idea is to distribute 120,000 refugees over two years: 54,000 from Hungary; 50,400 from Greece and 15,600 from Italy (Hungary objects to being considered a “frontline” state in this crisis and rejects the relocation proposal, so Hungary’s 54,000 will instead be transferred from Italy and Greece). The European Commission proposes that the scheme be mandatory for the EU Member States (the UK, Ireland, and Denmark are exempt from this EU policy area, but Denmark volunteers to take an additional 1,000 refugees, and Ireland 2,900 refugees).
7 October 2015	EU	The EU begins a new operation in the southern Mediterranean to intercept boats smuggling migrants. Under Operation Sophia, naval vessels will be able to board, search, seize and divert vessels suspected of being used for people smuggling or trafficking on the high seas. Until then, the EU focused on surveillance and rescue operations.
8 October 2015	Balkan route	The EU ministers for home and foreign affairs meet with their counterparts from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Western Balkans. Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland also attend. The conference focuses on the important increase in the number of migrants arriving from the Middle East through the Western Balkan route, with the aim to enhance engagement among all partners, increasing solidarity and ensuring orderly management of refugee and migration flows.
15 October 2015	EU-Turkey	The European Council backs an action plan with Turkey to ease the flow of migrants to Europe. The leaders agree to speed up visa liberalisation talks for Turks if Turkey stems the influx and to renew talks on Turkey joining the EU. The Turkish foreign minister says the deal is a draft and has not yet been agreed upon.
15 October 2015	Germany	Germany’s lower house of parliament, the Bundestag, amends the asylum law, designating Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro as safe countries of origin.

16 October 2015	Hungary	Hungary announces that it completed a fence along its 348 kilometres border with Croatia and will close the border at midnight. Such move forces migrants to divert to Slovenia. However, Slovenia, with a population of only two million, states that it will only be able to admit 2,500 people per day, stranding thousands of migrants in Croatia.
21 October 2015	Slovenia	The Slovenian government amends the country's Defence Act, allowing soldiers to assist police in patrolling the border, detain people and hand them over to police, and issue orders to civilians in the border area. (Until now, the army could provide only technical and logistical support to police.)
22 October 2015	Slovenia	Slovenia called for help from the EU after more than 12,600 migrants, many fleeing Syria, arrive in Slovenia in just 24 hours.
25 October 2015	Balkan route	The heads of 11 EU states and three Balkan states hold an emergency summit in Brussels to discuss the migrant crisis. A 17-point plan of cooperation is agreed upon, e.g. permanent exchange of information, discouraging secondary movements without informing the neighbouring countries, the provision of shelter and rest for refugees, increasing registration, enhancing return procedures of migrants not in need of international protection, strengthening border control, tackling smuggling and trafficking and provision of information to refugees and migrants. The countries pledge 100,000 more spaces in refugee centres, and 400 police officers are to be sent to Slovenia to help cope with the inflow.
27 October 2015	Balkan route	Coordinating with Croatia, Slovenia implements a new system of receiving refugees. They now reach the border-crossing Dobova by train, where they are registered and taken to Šentilj to be handed over to Austria.
29 October 2015	Slovenia	The number of refugees entering Slovenia in the second wave of migration passes 100.000.
4 November 2015	EU	The first relocations from Greece under a European Union scheme to resettle 160,000 refugees from Europe's first ports of entry start with some 30 asylum-seekers from Syria and Iraq

		heading to Luxembourg. The six families, with a total of 19 children, are relocated as part of a cooperative effort led by national authorities in Greece and Luxembourg, with support from European agencies, international organisations that included UNHCR, and other partners.
4 November 2015	Slovenia	To control the flow of refugees through Slovenia, the Parliament amends the Police Organisation and Work act, raising the maximum age of auxiliary police officers from 50 to 60 to raise the numbers of auxiliary forces supporting the regular police. (The amendment comes into force 13 November 2015.)
5 November 2015	Austria	Austria begins building a barrier along part of its border with Slovenia.
5 November 2015	Slovenia	EC awards 10.17 million euros in emergency funding to Slovenia to help the country to manage the migratory flows. The funding comes from the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa (ISF) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) which make available 4.918 million and 5.256 million euros respectively.
11 November 2015	Slovenia	Slovenia begins building a barrier along its border with Croatia to control the inflow of migrants. Later that day, Croatia asks Slovenia to dismantle part of the fence, claiming it went through Croatian territory, which the Slovenian government denies.
11–12 November 2015		Valletta Summit on Migration. On 12 November, the European and African leaders sign an agreement to set up an Emergency Trust Fund to help development in African countries as well as to encourage those countries to take back some migrants who arrive in Europe.
13 November 2015	France	Islamic State militants carry out a series of terrorist attacks in Paris, killing 130 civilians. Later, it emerges that some of the perpetrators entered Europe among the flow of migrants and refugees. The attacks prompt European officials to re-evaluate their stance toward migrants and border controls, insisting that greater scrutiny is needed in vetting migrants.
13 November 2015	Slovenia	The number of refugees entering Slovenia in the second wave of migration passes 200.000.
18 November 2015	Balkan route	Serbia and Macedonia limited entry to migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

19 November 2015	The Netherlands	The Netherlands proposes the establishment of a “Mini-Schengen area”, which would include Austria, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. (The proposal fails, but causes a big uproar in Slovenia.)
24 November 2015	Sweden	Sweden announces that it would be introducing temporary border checks to control the flow of migrants into the country, meaning that none would be allowed to cross the border without identification. It also announces that most refugees will receive only temporary residence permits from April. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven says: “It pains me that Sweden is no longer capable of receiving asylum seekers at the high level we do today”. Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson bursts into tears as she announces the measures.
28 November 2015	Macedonia	Macedonia begins building a barrier along part of its border with Greece. Clashes erupt between migrants and Macedonian riot police, which leave up to 40 people injured.
29 November 2015	EU-Turkey	The EU and Turkey adopt a joint action plan to deal with the refugee crisis created by the situation in Syria. The EU and its Member States will step up their political and financial engagement to stem the migration flow coming to the EU via Turkey. The EU is committed to providing an initial 3 billion euros of additional resources to help Turkey improve the situation of Syrian refugees currently in the country. Furthermore, the EU-Turkey readmission agreement will be fully applied from June 2016. The EU and Turkey are also aiming to complete the visa liberalisation process for Turkish citizens in the Schengen zone by October 2016.
2 December 2015	Slovakia	Slovakia files a lawsuit at the European Court of Justice (Case C-643/15) against the EU decision to redistribute 120,000 asylum seekers among the Member States, the first legal challenge to a measure that has divided the bloc. Slovakia received 154 asylum requests in 2015 and is due to take in 802 migrants under the relocation scheme.

3 December 2015	Hungary	Hungary files a lawsuit at the European Court of Justice (Case C-647/15) against the EU relocation plan. Under the EU quota system, Hungary is expected to take 306 refugees from Italy and 988 refugees from Greece.
7 December 2015	Slovenia	The number of refugees entering Slovenia in the second wave of migration passes 300.000.
7 December 2015	Austria	Austria starts erecting a wire fence on its border with Slovenia at the Šentilj border crossing.
15 December 2015	EU	The EC puts forward a package of proposals aimed at securing the EU's external borders and proposes the establishment of a European Border and Coast Guard which would also have the right to intervene in critical cases when a Member State is unable or unwilling to take the necessary measures.
16 December 2015	The Netherlands	2,000 people protest against plans to build a centre for asylum seekers in the Dutch town of Geldermalsen. Clashes with the police occur, during which several people are injured and officers fire warning shots.
16 December 2015	Norway	The Norwegian government creates the new cabinet office of Minister of Migration amid record-high numbers of asylum seekers in Norway, having received a total of 30,000 during 2015, which eventually resulted in a broad parliamentary consensus to tighten asylum regulations. The position is filled by Sylvi Listhaug, who vows to make Norway's asylum policy "one of the strictest in Europe".
31 December 2015		The UN refugee agency reports that more than one million migrants and refugees reached Europe by sea during 2015. More than 80 per cent arrived in Greece from Turkey, while most of the others arrived in Italy from Libya. It recorded that 3,735 had died or had been lost at sea.
31 December 2015	Germany	In 2015, around 890,000 asylum seekers came to Germany. In that same year, more than 1,000 attacks on asylum centres were reported, according to the Federal Criminal Police Office.
31 December 2015	Germany	37,220 migrants left Germany voluntarily in 2015 (mostly asylum-seekers from the Western Balkans), 20,914 were deported (BAMF data). Financial assistance is provided for those who leave voluntarily.

1 January 2016	Germany	During the 2016 New Year’s Eve celebrations, hundreds of sexual assaults, numerous thefts, and at least five rapes are reported in several German cities, mostly in Cologne city centre. The Chief Prosecutor states that “the overwhelming majority” of the suspects are asylum seekers and illegal immigrants who recently arrived from North Africa and the Middle East. The attacks lead to a hardening of attitudes against mass immigration and fuel a debate about the sustainability of Germany’s asylum policy and social differences between European and Islamic countries. The German government also proposes changing the law to make it easier to deport immigrants convicted of crimes.
4 January 2016	Sweden	Sweden introduces checks at its border with Denmark. The changes mean that no-one may cross the border without identification, and transport companies will be fined if travellers do not have valid identification. Sweden’s state-owned train operator SJ says it will stop services to and from Denmark because it could not perform the checks needed. In response, Denmark tightens border controls with Germany.
9 January 2016	Germany	In Cologne, about 1,700 people join a PEGIDA demonstration in protest at the New Year’s Eve assaults and call for Chancellor Angela Merkel to resign. When police try to disperse the rally, some protesters throw missiles and police responds by firing tear gas and water cannon. Leftists hold a counter-demonstration nearby. The following day, eleven immigrants are beaten by a group of vigilantes in the area where the assaults took place.
9 January 2016	Slovenia	The number of refugees entering Slovenia in the second wave of migration passes 400.000
25 January 2016	Sweden	A Swedish woman, Alexandra Mezher, is stabbed to death by an asylum seeker at the Mölndal refugee centre where she worked. The incident leads to a marked rise in violence against immigrants and support for far-right groups.
26 January 2016	Denmark	The Danish parliament passes a law allowing the government to seize valuables from asylum seekers to pay for their upkeep. It applies to valuables worth over 10,000 kroner but not those

		of sentimental value. Human rights groups widely criticize the law.
29 January 2016	Sweden	Up to 100 black-clad masked men march to Stockholm Central Station and attack young immigrants. They hand out leaflets claiming the immigrants have been regularly assaulting and robbing people at the station, and call for action against immigrant crime. This leads to clashes with the police.
3 February 2016	Germany	The German Bundestag adopts stricter asylum law (<i>Asylpaket II</i>)—fast-tracking for asylum-seekers from the so-called safe countries of origin (2 weeks), faster deportations for those rejected, suspending family reunification for those with subsidiary protection for two years.
4 February 2016	EU	The European Council president Donald Tusk joins world leaders at a conference in London to announce a 3 billion euros EU contribution to assist the Syrian people in 2016. This includes both people inside Syria as well as refugees and the communities hosting them in the neighbouring countries.
6 February 2016	EU-Turkey	The Turkish Foreign Ministry announces tighter visa restrictions on Iraqi citizens going to Turkey as a sign of determination to combat illegal immigration to Europe. Previously, Iraqis were allowed to enter Turkey visa-free for 30 days. Now, they are required to pre-apply for either an electronic or a paper visa to enter the country.
11 February 2016	EU-Turkey	Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan threatens to send millions of refugees from Turkey to the EU unless Turkey is given more funds to host the refugees. Meanwhile, NATO agrees to send a patrol of three ships to the Aegean to intercept migrants trying to reach Greece and to send them back to Turkey.
14 February 2016	Slovenia	After being informed by Austria of their stricter entry criteria, Slovenia also starts to implement stricter conditions, refusing entry to 154 people in the first couple of days.
15 February 2016	Balkan route	Leaders of Visegrad Group meet with their counterparts from Bulgaria and Macedonia in Prague and announce that Balkan route should be closed on Greek-Macedonian border by mid-March if Greece fails to protect its southern border. Visegrad countries will help Macedonia

		and other Balkan countries with the protection of their borders.
15 February 2016	Bulgaria	Bulgaria announces that it will close all its external EU borders and deport anyone who does not meet the criteria for asylum.
17 February 2016	Austria	Austria announces that it will introduce checks on its border with Hungary, Slovenia, and Italy. It also announces that, from 19 February onwards, it will set a daily cap on the number of asylum seekers allowed to enter the country (3,200) and limit daily asylum claims (80). The EU's Migration Commissioner says the cap on asylum claims would break EU and international law.
18 February 2016	Balkan route	Police chiefs from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria agree on Thursday to introduce joint registration of refugees crossing from Greece into Macedonia and organise their transport from the border straight to Austria. They agreed on a daily quota of 580 migrants per day.
20 February 2016	Slovenia	The Slovenian Safe Country of Origin list is implemented, including Albania, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Egypt, Kosovo, Macedonia, Morocco, Serbia, Tunisia, and Turkey.
20 February 2016	Slovenia	Around 3,000 people gather in Slovenian town Šenčur to protest the accommodation of asylum-seekers in the Baumax building. This is followed by anti-migrant protests in towns Vrhnika (26 February), Lenart (26 February) and Logatec (23—24 February). In Lendava, an anti-migrant petition is launched on 24 February.
21 February 2016		Macedonia closes its borders to all refugees but Syrians and Iraqis. By the next day, 5,000 people are stuck at the Greek border town of Idomeni.
22 February 2016	Slovenia	Due to the growing number of asylum-seekers, Slovenia activates the second phase of the contingency plan, approving two new branches of the asylum home—one on Kotnikova street in the capital Ljubljana and one in Logatec.
22 February 2016	Slovenia	Slovenian parliament activates Article 37a of the Defence Act, granting the army extraordinary police powers for three months. The decision comes into effect 24 February 2016.

23 February 2016	Belgium	Belgium introduces temporary controls on its border with France to prevent a potential inflow of UK-bound migrants from the Calais migrant camps.
23 February 2016	Norway	Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg proposes force majeure emergency legislation that would allow rejecting all asylum seekers coming to Norway. The measures, which would break international law, would be implemented in the case of a “complete breakdown” of neighbouring Sweden’s asylum system.
24 February 2016	Hungary	The Hungarian government announces that it will hold a referendum on the EU’s mandatory migrant quotas. The European Commission criticises the decision, while European Parliament president Martin Schulz condemns it as a “populist and nationalist response to a global challenge”.
24 February 2016		Vienna conference “Managing Migration Together”, with foreign and interior ministers from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, with the aim of coordinating national measures with Balkan countries on and near the main migrant trail.
26 February 2016	Greece	Two Pakistani migrants try to publicly hang themselves in front of onlookers in the centre of Athens, in protest at being stranded in Greece.
27 February 2016	Slovenia	Two rallies take place on Kotnikova Street, Ljubljana. Around 1,000 people gather for a rally in support of refugees, while 600 people gather at the counter-protest against refugees and the asylum home. There are no incidents.
29 February 2016	France	Clashes erupt as French authorities begin demolishing part of the “Calais Jungle” migrant camp. Migrants and “No Borders” activists throw stones and set shacks ablaze while about 150 migrants, some wielding iron bars, run onto the road to block vehicles. Riot police respond with tear gas. The government wants to move migrants to official accommodation made from converted shipping containers, but most refuse, fearing they would be forced to claim asylum in France rather than Britain.

4 March 2016	EU	The EC presented a plan to restore normalcy to the Schengen area and end border controls within the area by the end of 2016. Three areas action-points are identified: assisting Greece in managing its external border, the Member States must stop simply waving asylum-seekers through to the next country and the unilateral decisions on border patrols by the Member States need to be replaced with a coordinated approach to temporary border controls.
4 March 2016	Slovenia	A parliamentary right-wing SDS party proposes a consultative referendum on whether the parliament should pass a bill capping the annual number of asylum seekers in Slovenia. Other political parties do not support the proposal.
4 March 2016	Slovenia	Despite obstruction by some opposition parties, the Slovenian parliament passes a new International Protection Act which allows for the implementation of EU law in the Slovenian system and further specifies certain procedures.
7 March 2016	EU-Turkey	The EU and Turkish leaders agree that Turkey will accept the rapid return of all migrants coming from Turkey to Greece that are not in need of international protection. In exchange, visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens will be accelerated as will the disbursement of 3 billion euros and additional funding for Syrians.
9 March 2016	Balkan route	Balkan countries announce tighter restrictions on migrant entry, in a bid to close the “Balkan route”. Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia announce that only migrants who plan to seek asylum in the country, or those with clear humanitarian needs will be allowed entry and that those without the valid documents will be turned back.
9 March 2016	Hungary	Hungary declares a state of emergency due to the migrant crisis and deploys additional police and military to its borders.
9 March 2016	Slovenia	At midnight, Slovenia again starts implementing Schengen rules at the border with Croatia, meaning that entry is only granted to foreigners who fulfil the conditions for entry, who wish to apply for asylum in Slovenia or who are granted entry on humanitarian grounds after an individual assessment.