

: Programme

As at 27/10/2023

sef: Policy Lunch

Migration Partnerships – Outsourcing of a European Controversy or Chance for a Just Cooperation with Third Countries?

16 November 2023

12.00 hrs – 13.45 hrs (CET)

Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU
Rue Montoyer 47, Brussels

Conference language: English

Supported by

The State Government of
North Rhine-Westphalia



BACKGROUND

The number of refugees and migrants to the EU has increased significantly in recent months. It is to be expected that this number will continue to rise due to a continuously high number of violent conflicts in many parts of the world and accelerating effects of climate change. At the same time, Germany and other EU member states have an increased need for a regulated immigration due to labour shortages in many economic sectors.

Since the arrival of an unprecedented number of refugees in 2015, the EU has been striving to adapt its asylum and migration legislation. The latest agreement of the interior and justice ministers of the EU in June 2023 has prompted highly diverse reactions: some commended it a milestone for European asylum and migration policy, others, particularly from civil society, call the agreement “misanthropic”. While proponents argue that the agreement will create legal certainty, enhancing the prospects of acceptance into the EU for those genuinely in need. Conversely, critics argue that the EU’s measures are progressively shifting towards compartmentalisation and deterrence, with humanitarian considerations increasingly relegated to the sidelines.

In the course of the discussions, the EU and its member states are also paying renewed attention to the external dimension of their migration policies, which comprises a toolbox of policy measures, legal instruments, and financial incentives for cooperation with third countries on the management of migration, borders, and asylum. These measures emphasize the growing tendency within the EU to prevent migration overseas before migrants reach EU borders and thereby to “outsource” the migration problem. One of those measures is the aspiration of EU and its member states to expand its “targeted migration partnerships” with third countries, as also laid out in Germany’s National Security Strategy published in June 2023. The EU has already signed an agreement with Tunisia, which evoked severe criticism from various civil society groups who accuse the EU of conducting a dirty deal with an autocratic regime and disregarding its human rights obligations. Nevertheless, the EU plans to also develop agreements with further countries.

In this Policy Lunch, we would like to discuss with our panellists whether migration partnerships, be it bilaterally or at EU level, have the potential to contribute to just asylum and refugee policies of the EU. How must such partnerships be designed to fulfill Europe’s aspiration to regulate immigration more tightly, while simultaneously guaranteeing the protection and humane treatment of migrants and refugees?

12.00 HRS REGISTRATION AND LIGHT LUNCH

12.30 HRS WELCOME

Rainer Steffens

Director, Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU, Brussels

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

12.40 HRS ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Georgia Papagianni

MENA Regional and Horizontal Affairs Coordinator
European External Action Service, Brussels

Camille Le Coz

Associate Director
Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPI), Brussels

Dr Tamirace Fakhoury

Associate Professor
Department of Politics and Society
Aalborg University, Copenhagen

Chair

Dr Zeynep Şahin-Mencütek

Senior Researcher, Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), Bonn

Followed by Discussion with the audience

13.45 Hrs End of event