
Migration in Europe and Brexit

Europe has dealt with many complex issues since the roots of the European Union were first formed in 1951. From the challenge of reuniting Europe following World War II to the more modern issues of today, such as Brexit, terrorism, and immigration, Europe has been challenged over the past century. One issue that was an overarching and continuously mentioned theme this week was the immigration crisis facing Europe. This migration issue has been at the foundation of many other issues facing European Union countries, such as Brexit and Germany's immigration policy that is testing Angela Merkel's administration.

The main source of this issue arises from the unrest in the middle east. The asylum seekers were those who were fleeing war, violence, or persecution- most of which came from Syria, Eritrea, or Afghanistan. The issue began to pick up steam as EU countries began struggling to handle the influx of migrants, even though many of the immigrants landed in neighboring African countries. As more and more migrants made the dangerous trek across the Mediterranean Sea, tragedies occurred and the European Immigration Crisis became worldwide news.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IMO), around 3,072 people died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean into Europe in 2014. The easiest solution would be to just open borders across Europe to help with the inflow of immigrants, much like Germany did. But countries soon began to worry that some of these immigrants were using the 'refugee' tag to enter the country and cause harm, as the Islamic State and terrorism are constant threats in today's world. This fear caused many countries to simply turn their shoulder away from Italy and Greece who were bearing most of the European immigration. Since the European Union stands for free borders and movement of people, this created tension and a problem between the countries of how to properly regulate the immigrants.

The consequences and affects of this crisis have been felt all across the EU. From the more obvious proof of Brexit to the accepting German immigration policy, there hasn't been one solution as of yet that works to solve the issue. The vote by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union was seen, in part, as a response to the migration crisis. They saw the EU as a source of uncontrolled immigration and wanted to keep their borders secure. Germany took a different approach. They opened their border to over one million migrants. Now, they are planning to send new migrants back to other EU countries if they have registered there previously. This has prompted some countries, like Austria, to reassess and make their border policy more strict.

As the crisis wears on, it will be interesting to see how Brexit plays a role on the decisions of other countries. There has been talk of other countries, such as Italy, leaving the European Union. If Brexit proves successful and ultimately helps the UK and their border other countries may follow suit. Although it would be interesting to see in Italy's case since they are one of the main entry points for the immigration crisis.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my week in Brussels this week. As an American student, I have studied the European Union but did not know the full impact it had on each and every member state. I was able to receive clarification on what each branch of the European Union does and is

responsible for. The commission takes a front seat in this immigration debate since they are the ones who will propose new legislation for the EU to help settle the issue. It was also interesting to hear about the attitudes of EU workers and members states around Brexit. While they clearly know it is not ideal for the EU, they more view it as a loss for the UK. This was not what I initially expected coming into the week. Overall, I learned a lot and was able to expand my global perspective on a variety of issues.

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