

The timeless island. The impact of EU and national legislation and procedures on refugees' temporalities in Lesvos

Since the summer of 2015, **the island of Lesvos in Greece** has been the front stage of the so-called "refugees' crisis" and one of the places where the EU policies for migration control have been tested and implemented.

Different EU and national laws, regulations and guidelines have had a direct impact on the refugee population arriving on the island. The "**hotspot approach**", the "**EU – Turkey statement**" of March 2016, the **Greek law on international protection (4636/2019)**, the new "**European Pact on Migration and Asylum**" directly affect the possibility to continue the journey through Europe and impose on people different temporalities – related to the asylum procedure – totally out of their control.

Until early 2020, the procedure entailed very long **waiting times** with serious repercussions on refugees' lives on the **hotspot - island**, notorious for the poor living conditions inside the Moria camp.

From February 2020, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the pushback practices implemented by Greek authorities led to a drastic reduction in arrivals; then, the Moria fire of September 2020 caused the displacement of thousands of people from Lesvos to the mainland. The decrease in residents allowed for a 'better efficiency' and produced an **acceleration** of the asylum procedure, and consequently led to a compression of refugees' rights, who often start their procedure without the necessary awareness.

Furthermore, the Greek decision to consider Turkey a 'safe country' for people from Afghanistan, Syria, Bangladesh, Somalia and Pakistan, produced a situation of **juridical and existential limbo**. As Turkey is not allowing re-admissions on its territory since 2020, thousands of people persist for long periods without access to reception and protection.

The authors resided in Lesvos during spring and summer 2022 to conduct their researches; the intersection of the study of legislation and its implementation (Marcella Cometti) with the ethnographic material collected on the field (Luca Daminelli) allows to understand the **direct impact of asylum procedures on refugees' lives**.

Keywords: hotspot approach; asylum procedures; temporalities; border regime; waiting.

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Marcella Cometti is a PhD candidate in European Union Law and National Legal Systems at the University of Ferrara. She holds a master's degree in Law. Her doctoral research is focusing on the European Union Agency for Asylum's role and its power/functions in the different national legal systems. During her residence period in Lesvos, she worked with HIAS, an NGO that provides legal support to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection and initiates strategic litigation to increase the levels of protection provided by the Greek asylum system.

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