

# SPAIN, NO COUNTRY FOR REFUGEES?



Claudio Moreno-Medina ([claudio.moreno@ulpgc.es](mailto:claudio.moreno@ulpgc.es)); Josefina Domínguez-Mujica ([josefina.dominguezmujica@ulpgc.es](mailto:josefina.dominguezmujica@ulpgc.es)); Juan Parreño-Castellano ([juan.parreno@ulpgc.es](mailto:juan.parreno@ulpgc.es)); Ramón Díaz-Hernández ([ramon.diaz@ulpgc.es](mailto:ramon.diaz@ulpgc.es)) and Tanausú Pérez García ([tanausugp@gmail.com](mailto:tanausugp@gmail.com))



GEOGRAPHIES FOR PEACE. LA PAZ – BOLIVIA. IGU Thematic Conference, 23-25 April 2017



## INTRODUCTION

In recent years the number of persons forced into displacement as a result of wars and political instability has reached the highest levels in history. In 2015, there were 63.91 million people affected (UNHCR), half of whom came from ten countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Central African Republic, Iraq and Eritrea. The Middle East and The Horn of Africa generate most of the dislocations due to the persistence of the Palestinian conflict, the instability in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan, and the terrible civil war in Syria, which has shed so much blood since 2011. In the last six years, Syria has created the largest exodus of people since World War Two.

An 86% of the refugees received asylum in non-European Union countries (mainly in Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan and other Sub-Saharan African countries). The European Union countries accepted a total of 1,321,600 asylum seekers in 2015 and around 1.3 million in 2016 (EUROSTAT). Spain was one of the least welcoming nations despite its geographical location in the Southern border of the EU. In 2016, it received 880 refugees, mainly from Greece and Italy (591) and from Lebanon and Turkey (289). Overall, from the moment the European Commission signed the redistribution agreement in September of 2015, to the end of 2016, Spain received 898 refugees, i.e. a 5% of the 17,337 that the Government had committed to through such agreement.

## SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

- Quantitative analysis of the data provided by the Spanish Home Office Ministry ([http://www.interior.gob.es/web/archivos-y-documentacion/documentacion-y-publicaciones/anuarios-y-estadisticas/anuarios-estadisticos-formato-reutilizable/2014/proteccion\\_internacionan](http://www.interior.gob.es/web/archivos-y-documentacion/documentacion-y-publicaciones/anuarios-y-estadisticas/anuarios-estadisticos-formato-reutilizable/2014/proteccion_internacionan))
- Quantitative analysis of the EUROSTAT data (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/statistics-illustrated>)
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the information (data and reports) provided by the UNHCR (<http://www.unhcr.org>)
- Qualitative analysis of the information provided by mass media and NGO's reports
- Processing of cartography using ArcGIS

## OBJECTIVES

- Characterize the evolution of the number of displaced people, refugees, asylum seekers and UNHCR-assisted people since 2008 (Dublin statistics)
- Mapping the routes of forced migrations in Europe and the consolidation of the European fortress
- Interpret the political Spanish role in the context of European Union on the named “refugees' crisis”
- Compare the lack of action from the Spanish central government on asylum seekers with the initiatives taken by civil society, NGOs and regional governments to facilitate their arrival and settlement

## COMPLAINTS OF THE MEDIA



## ACTS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY



## CENTRAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS

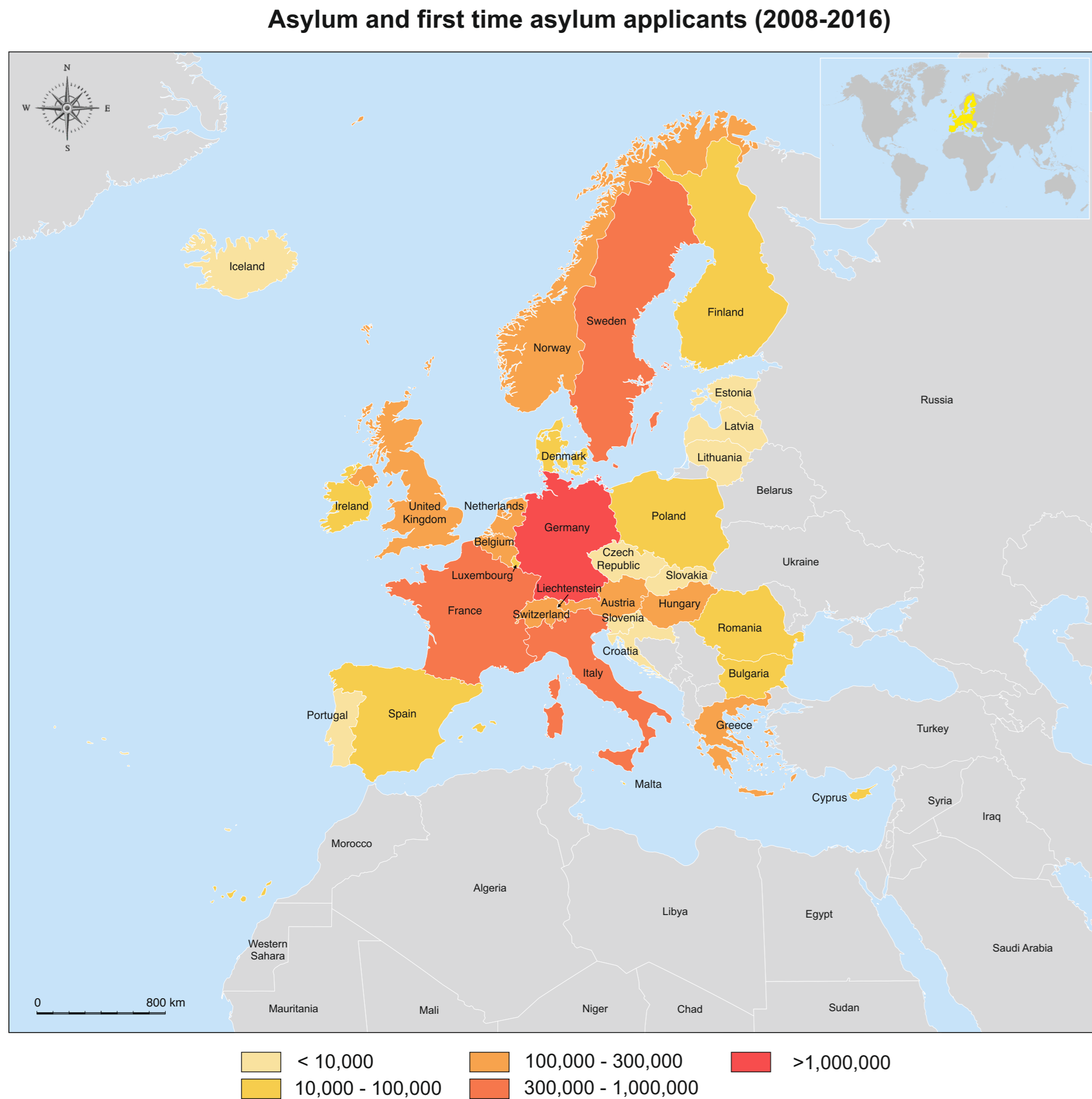


## RESPONSES FROM THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES



## ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN EUROPE AND SPAIN

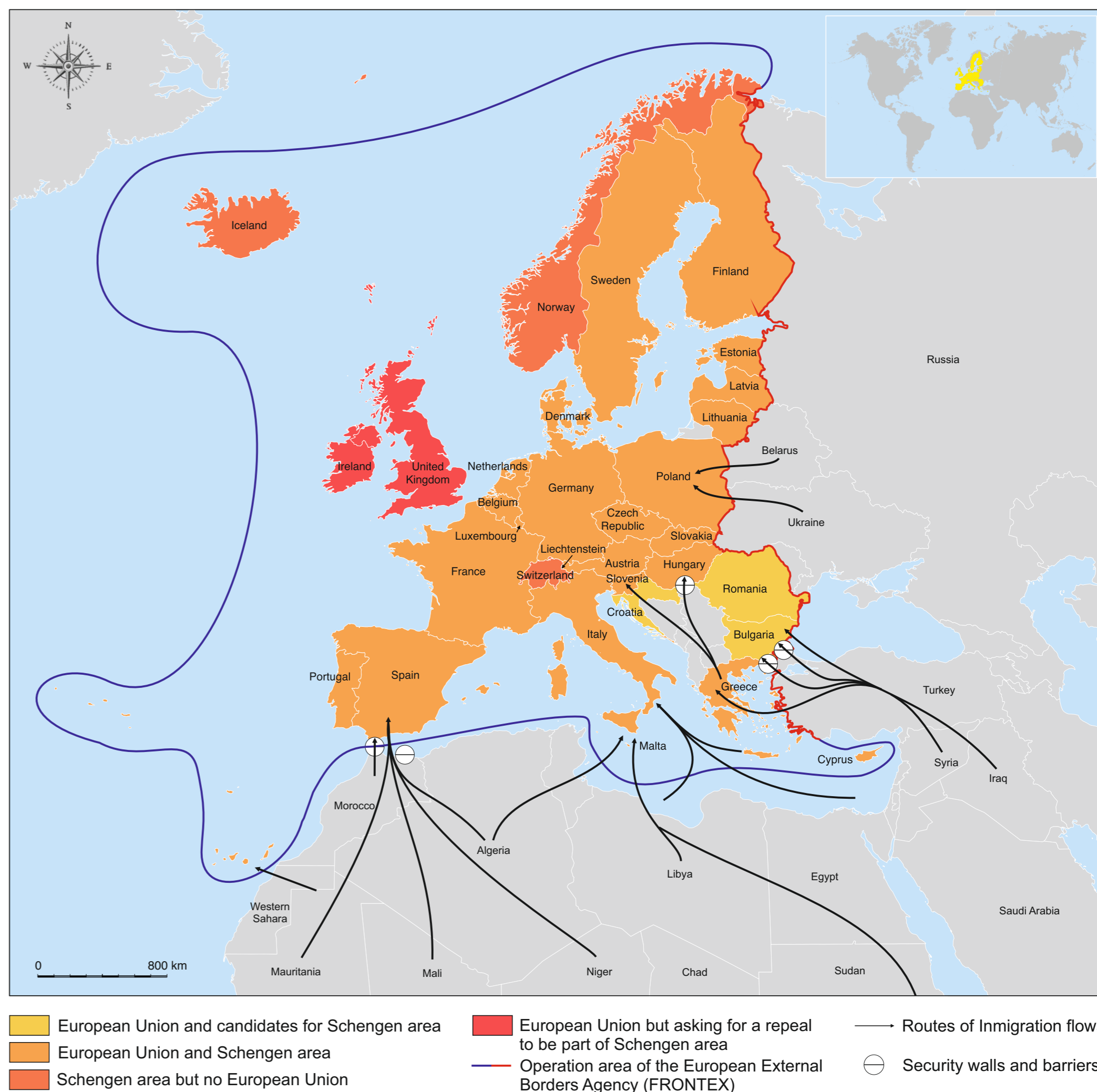
In accordance with the data provided by UNHCR there were 65.3 million of displaced people worldwide by the end of the year 2015, of which 21.3 million were refugees (53% from three countries: Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria). Since the beginning of this year, Europe has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of refugees. UNHCR's Europe hosted the second largest number of refugees, slightly behind Africa. In 2015, the majority (58%) of refugees in Europe resided in Turkey (2.5 million), mostly from Syria and Iraq. Other European nations hosting large numbers of refugees include Germany (316,100), the Russian Federation (314,500), France (273,100), Sweden (169,500), the United Kingdom (123,100), and Italy (118,000). The 28-member EU received a total of 1,322,825 and 1,258,865 asylum and first time asylum applicants in 2015 and 2016, but all of the agreements by European leaders to relocate and resettle refugees turned out to be a failure due to the priority given to externalize borders, with agreements such as the one signed with Turkey in March 2016.



### The drama of refugees



### The European Fortress



According to the CEAR (Spanish Commission for Refugees) Executive Summary 2016 Report (p. 5), Spain attended nearly 15,000 asylum seekers in 2015, the highest number ever registered. However, this number continued to account for just 1% of those who were attended to by the 28 countries of the European Union as a whole. Furthermore, the Government only granted the status of refugee to 218 people, and subsidiary protection to 802, while denying any kind of protection to 68.5% of the people that applied. The “push-back” practice in Ceuta and Melilla continued, even if recently condemned by the United Nations, and so did the difficulties for applicants and stowaway immigrants to liaise with the procedures at immigration detention centers. According to the information provided by the Spanish Home Office Ministry, most applications corresponded to Syrian and Ukrainian citizens, and 5,178 of the requests were done at the Moroccan border in Beni-Enzar (Melilla). Additionally, 5,270 applications were received from other European Union countries (Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden).

Various NGOs and Spanish regional institutions complained to the National Government and to the EU about the delays and the bureaucratic hurdles to receive the 9.1% quota (8,023) of asylum seekers advised by the European Council Directive of 23 April 2015. The reasons for the no implementation of the European Directive and for the lack of action by the authorities differ from the initiatives taken by the civil society, certain NGOs and local communities to facilitate their arrival and settlement.

## CONCLUSIONS

Asylum claims in Europe reached record levels in 2016, despite the slowdown in the arrival of foreigners. A total of 1.2 million people applied for international protection this past year in the EU, a level almost identical to that of 2015. This shows that asylum and immigration must be incorporated as central elements of European foreign policy, not only in their relations with countries of origin and transit but also with respect to other geographical areas. The EU must press for a more equitable distribution of refugees among developed countries and a clear compulsory nature.

Despite its population weight in the whole of Europe, Spain receives very few applications (1.3% of them from the European Union). In addition, the profile of who seeks protection in Spain differs from the mean: the most were Venezuelan (25%) and Syrian (19%). The refugee crisis is a unique opportunity for Spain to take a radical turn in its immigration policy, incorporate the displacement between its priorities in the national and international agenda, promote the safe and legal transit of migrants and increase the funds for cooperation and humanitarian actions. Spain can boast of having integrated a wave of migrants of singular size and intensity into its society during its recent history, unaccompanied by social conflicts of any note or by the emergence of xenophobic movements. It is still, however, a long way from giving protection to refugees and asylum seekers, as denounced by media, NGOs, local and autonomous governments and civil society.

## REFERENCES

- CEAR (2016): Executive Summary 2016 Report. Retrieved from <https://www.cear.es/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Executive-Summary-2016-Report-CEAR.pdf>
- EUROSTAT (2017): Asylum and first time asylum applicants (2008-2016). Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database>
- GONZÁLEZ HENRÍQUEZ, C. (2016): “Highs and lows of immigrant integration in Spain” ARI 47/2016, Elcano Royal Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/web/rielcano\\_en/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_in/zonas\\_in/ARI47-2016-GonzalezEnriquez-Highs-lows-immigrant-integration-Spain](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/web/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ARI47-2016-GonzalezEnriquez-Highs-lows-immigrant-integration-Spain)
- UNHCR (2016): Global trends. Forced displacement in 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>