

Gaja Frece z Gimnazije Slovenj Gradec je raziskovala mediteransko migracijsko pot. V svojem prispevku predstavlja potek migracij preko Mediteranskega morja, vzroke zanje, reševalne akcije in medijske odzive na dogajanje.

INSIDE THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST MIGRATION ROUTE

By Gaja Frece



The Mediterranean Sea is one of the deadliest points for immigrants trying to migrate to Europe. On average 10 people lose their lives or go missing each week, that is why it has been named Europe's forgotten graveyard.



Overcrowded immigrant vessel

The vast majority of people who try to cross the Mediterranean start their journey in Libya, where they often experience inhumane living conditions, kidnapping and even extortion. These people later get handed over to smugglers who, for a hefty amount of money, get them through the borders, over fences and in the end onto small, crowded boats. These vessels, unfit at handling strong winds and big waves, are the biggest cause of deaths amongst the migrants coming to Europe. More than 20000 lives had been lost since 2014 and over 600 in the year 2021 alone.

What is the reason for these mass migrations?

There are many factors being taken into consideration when talking about why people immigrate to Europe. The three main reasons are:

Socio-political factors:

People flee their home county from armed conflicts, persecution, and human rights violation. These people are most often humanitarian refugees seeking asylum in close, safe countries.



Conflict and war in Africa

Demographic and economic factors

Demographic changes determine how and where people migrate, it also impacts the country's economy, its growth and job market. These migrations often lead to xenophobia targeted towards the people trying to find new job opportunities, better education, or higher living standards.

Environmental factors



Consequences of climate change

The environment has always been a factor in mass migration, people flee natural disasters and climate changes.

According to the International Organization for Migration, "Environmental migrants are those who for reason of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad."

It is hard to predict how many environmental migrants there are, but due to climate change and overpopulation the numbers are skyrocketing. Estimates vary from 25 million to one billion by the year 2050.

Who is helping these people safely cross the mediterranean?



Migrant vessel being rescued

The Mediterranean is divided into search and rescue zones that determine which county is responsible for bringing migrants to the nearest safe port. Many humanitarian organisations send out boats to these areas, often with mostly volunteers on board. They wait patiently for messages and signs of immigrant vessels, because of how little information is provided, these searches can take days.

The messages with the location of these vessels are sent by cargo ships, passing the wrecked boats. The large ships do not stop or help the people, out of economic reasons such as money loss.

The rescue



Rescue ship with immigrants, the ship was founded by Banksy

As the rescue boat finds the migrant vessel, they start with evacuation, first mothers with children, then women and lastly men. The rescue team hands out life jackets and masks, if the waves aren't too big and the migrant vessel is in a good shape, the rescue often goes smoothly.

But unfortunately, these types of rescues are rare, the migrant vessels are often in a very bad shape, overfilled with people and slowly sinking, when the rescue team arrives at the scene people might start jumping into the sea, despite not knowing how to swim. Situations like these are very dangerous for others on the sinking vessel, especially children, as well as risky and hard to handle for *the* rescue team.

The main rescue boat then becomes “a battleground,” as one of the rescuers said. There are people laying on the floor, some in shock and others battling for their lives. Everybody is medically examined and divided into groups according to their gender, age, medical state and whether they have children with them. The healthy

people onboard now become a part of the rescue team, usually without any encouragement, helping the rescue team and other immigrants.

Aftermath and media coverage



Immigrants waiting to be taken into refugee camps

Once the rescue ships reach mainland, the immigrants get transported to a refugee camp, there they await the decision on their asylum application, which can take years.

These tragedies do not get much media coverage, as they happen outside the European bubble, where people choose to look away rather than act. It seems that an international story about an awful tragedy, is what it takes to make the refugees seen as human.

It is a shame that hundreds of lives have to be lost, to bring attention to something that is happening daily.

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