



14.04.2016 - UNRIC hosted a timely panel discussion 13 April on the prospects and challenges facing Greece, the European Union and the international community in handling the refugee crisis.

The event was organised by AGORA, a Brussels-based network of Greek-speaking European institutions staff members, with the support of UNRIC. A panel consisted of Mr. Christos Christou, President of the Greek Section of Médecins Sans Frontières, Mr. Claus Sorensen, Senior Adviser for Resilience, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response at the European Political Strategy Centre and Emmy Takahashi, head of UNHCR's Global Issues Unit, Brussels.

The speakers outlined key challenges on the ground and highlighted some of the issues in the EU's approach to the crisis. The implications of the recent [EU-Turkey agreement](#) were also discussed.

Sorensen stressed the need for coordination and cooperation on issues such as border control

and the need for a coordinated multi-departmental approach, including vital information-sharing and the important role of communication between security branches.

Christou emphasized harsh realities on the ground such as how the closing of borders simply redirects migrants and refugees; it does not stop them - they are determined people in search of safety and security. "A desperate situation is forcing them to act desperately," he said.

Emmy Takahashi provided UNHCR's perspective on the situation, emphasizing that the main priority is the legal protection refugees should be granted under international law. All European countries are signatories to the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) and are therefore obliged to provide asylum to those fleeing persecution. Takahashi demonstrated UNHCR's

[Web Portal](#)

which provides up-to-date live data on refugee flows and trends.

Mrs. Laetitia de Radigues, from the European Commission, DG ECHO Refugee Task Force, made an intervention on the state of play and modalities of the new EU Instrument for Emergency Assistance within the EU.

Speakers agreed that the main issue is perhaps one of image - a need for Europe to retreat from 'fortress' to one of reception and to re-adopt the identity it embraced following the Second World War.

UNRICs Related Links

- [UN Library Archive: Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#)

- [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

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