

Migration Graduate Student Project III

Project Summary

The aim of the project “International Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region in the aftermath Covid-19“ is to investigate and analyze the impact of the recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has on migration and mobility movements, as well as on the situation of migrants and refugees within the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

To this end, three qualified students will be selected to enroll in the MA program at the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Each student will work on a specific country/sub-region within the Mediterranean and MENA-Region.

Introduction

The recent spread of COVID-19 is having severe effects on migrants and refugees, as well as on migration and mobility trends globally, hence also in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

On the one hand, the economic toll sparked by containment measures and the collapse of the oil prices in the course of the pandemic has greatly impacted the livelihoods of the majority of migrants and refugees in the region. Many of them are facing loss of employment, lack of social protection, as well as poor health care and an increase in xenophobia.

On the other hand, since March 2020, European as well as countries in the MENA-region have issued several travel restrictions. As a result, many migrants are currently stuck in transit, unable to reach their destination or to get back to their country of origin as borders have been closed down.

It is likely that the economic downturn and changing labor markets, as well as further restrictions on mobility will continue in the near future and have a huge impact on migrant’s mobility and livelihood. However, there is a great need of exploring in-depth the political as well social impact on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region on the nation state level, as well as on individual migrant and refugee livelihoods.

Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a huge impact on the border and mobility politics, as well on the livelihood and safety of migrants and refugees in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. As the phenomenon is very recent, there is a great need of exploring in- depth the impact on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region on different levels.

How does the pandemic impact cross border movements and migration in the MENA Region, as well as between Africa and Europe? What are economic and social consequences in the different regions, and how do these consequences impact the livelihoods and safety of the migrants and refugees in the different regions?

Background

CMRS was established in 2000 as a program on refugees’ issues and its scope was extended to include migration issues in 2008. The situation of refugees and migrants in Egypt have always been an important component of the center’s study. This project on “International Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region after Covid-19“ will build upon the existing knowledge of the center and investigate the social and political changes within the course of the current Pandemic regarding migration and mobility, and the situation for migrants and refugees in the region. Besides that, the project will expand the research focus through comparative analysis with different countries in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. The project will also benefit from the Center’s involvement in a global research hub. The Hub is funded through UKRI’s Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and will see CMRS join forces with universities and organizations from across the world to explore how the movement of people in the Global South is affecting inequality and development in less developed regions.

Significance

This project on the impact of COVID 19 on international migration will explore the impact on migration and border politics within the Euro-Mediterranean region, as well as on migrants and refugee livelihoods within the region. As the phenomenon is new, there is a great need of exploring in-depth the impact on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. This project will contribute to the important research for academia as well as society.

Project Description

This project aims to examine the impact of the recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has on migration and mobility movements, as well as on the situation of migrants and refugees within the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

The project will look on its impact on economic, legal and societal levels. The following questions will be at the center of the project:

How does the pandemic impact cross border movements and migration in the MENA Region, as well as between Africa and Europe?

What are the economic and social consequences in the different regions, and how do these consequences impact the livelihoods of the migrants and refugees in these different regions?

Three qualified students will work on different aspects of the project. One student will work on the implications for migration movements and border politics with regard to African-European migration, looking on political, economic as well as social dimensions which shape the dynamics. One student will work on the impact on migrations movements from North Africa towards the Gulf-States, focusing on economic, political and social dimensions which shape the interplay. The third student will compare the situation of migrants and refugees in two countries of the MENA region (for instance: Egypt and Tunisia).

The methodology of the project will be qualitative based. Research methods will include intensive desk research, looking at newspapers, legal reports, etc., as well as in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions with migrants and refugees, and semi structured interviews with experts in the field in the selected countries.

The three students selected for this project would be advised to enroll in particular elective courses that relate to the subject of the project. Following the completion of the five core courses and the three elective courses that constitute the MA in Migration Studies, the students will be mentored throughout the data collection process for the project and the writing of the final thesis. The course work will be completed within one or one and a half years. Another one or one and a half years will be devoted to the data collection process and writing. The whole duration of the project as such will be three years. The expected result will be three well-written MA theses that can be adapted for publication in the Center's series on Migration Studies and/or in peer review journals. Each of the three students will also present their work in international conferences related to the project theme.

The Advancement of Scientific Knowledge and Broader Impact

As the phenomenon is very recent, there exists a huge lack of scientific knowledge and research on the topic. Hence the project will importantly contribute to the new body of research and to filling the gap in literature.

The project will also contribute to building the capacity of young researchers and train them to contribute to the field of Migration Studies, in particular, and Social Science Studies, in general.

Biographical Sketches

Gerda Heck is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Migration. Her academic work and research focuses on migration and border regimes, urban studies, transnational migration,

migrant networks and self-organizing, religion and new concepts of citizenship. She has conducted research in Germany, Brazil, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Morocco, Turkey and the USA.

Ibrahim Awad is a political scientist and political economist. At present, he is a professor of practice of global affairs and the director of CMRS. He has worked for the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the International Labor Organization, holding positions such as secretary of the commission, UN-ESCWA; director, ILO Sub-Regional Office for North Africa; and director, ILO International Migration Program.

Leveraging Resources

CMRS is currently conducting research on the impact of the recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has on the situation for migrants and refugees in Egypt. Furthermore, CMRS engagement in the UKRI GCRF South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub will provide an invaluable resource opportunity to students of the TLG program. In terms of academic resources, the Hub researchers and scholars can be regularly consulted. In addition to the Hub, students will also benefit from CMRS resources in terms of its strong connection with the migrant and refugee communities, as well as the organizations working in the field both in Egypt and beyond.

Deliverables

Three MA theses, each comparatively analyzing the situation of women in the migration context in two countries of destination

Three conference papers presented by the students in international conferences

Three papers based on the theses to be published on CMRS series ‘Cairo Studies on Migration and Refugees’

Professional Development and Mentoring Plan

The selected students will be mentored regularly by the theses supervisors

A workshop will be organized during the thesis writing process in which the selected students will participate to review issues related to the literature review, data collection, and application of the theories studied

References

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