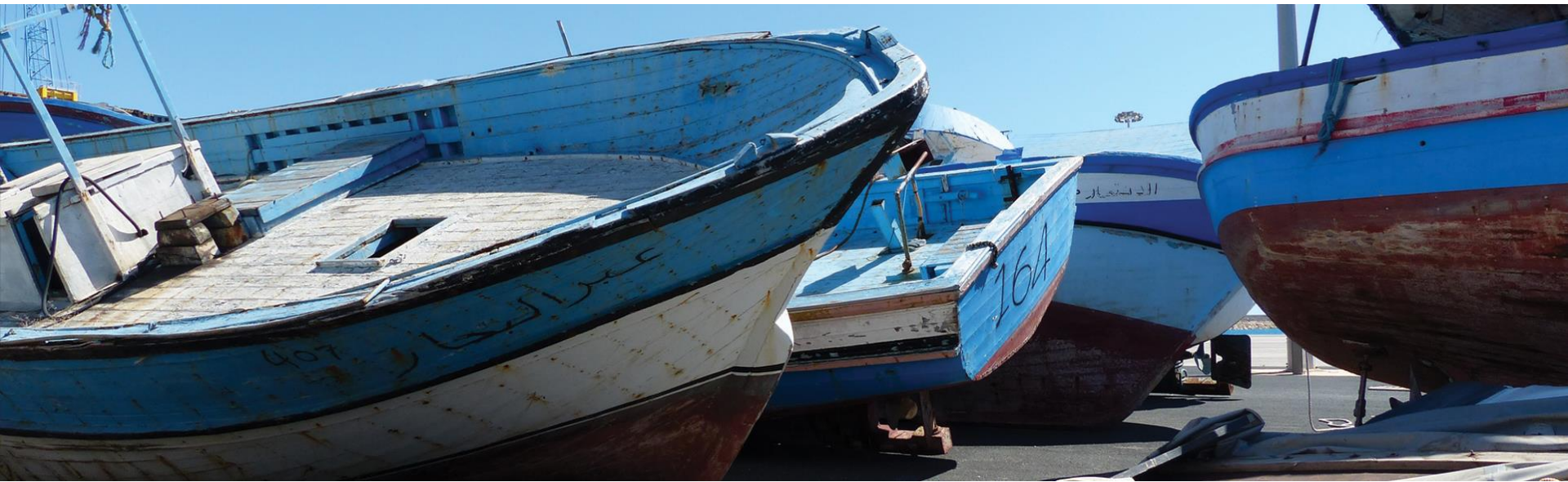




Between the devil and the deep blue sea

**Understanding the dynamics of migration across the
Mediterranean in 2015**

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The view from Europe

- The ‘migration crisis’ dominated political and media debate during 2015
- Focus was largely on the **drama of the perilous journeys** across the Mediterranean, **smugglers** facilitating irregular crossings, **hardships endured by refugees and migrants** during the journey / arrival, and the **political, economic, social and cultural implications** of increased migration
- **The view from Europe tells us only a small part of a much bigger story**
- By the end of 2015 more than 65 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, a quarter of whom (21.3 million) were refugees
- Scale of displacement **accelerated during the course of 2015** with an estimated 12.4 million people newly displaced due to conflict /persecution
- Vast majority of the world’s refugees (86%) live in low- and middle-income countries (Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan)
- Discussion of the ‘crisis’ gave the impression of a **linear, uninterrupted flow of people heading towards Europe**, most commonly represented by straight arrows on a map linking two distinct areas
- Reflected in the tendency to focus almost exclusively on the beginning and the end of peoples journeys to the neglect of everything in-between

Destination Europe

Arrivals by sea

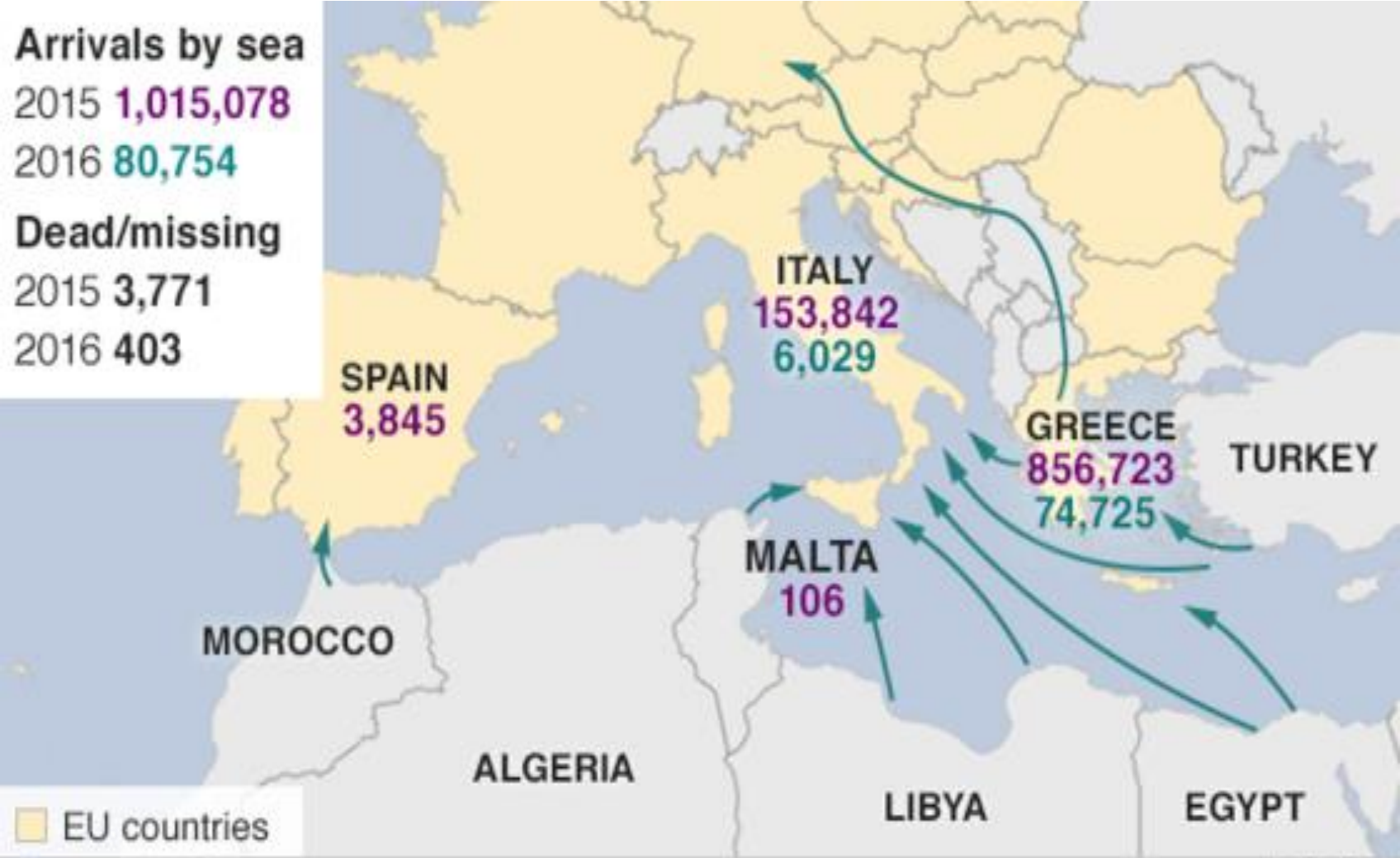
2015 **1,015,078**

2016 **80,754**

Dead/missing

2015 **3,771**

2016 **403**



Source: UNHCR



About the MEDMIG study

- Funded by the ESRC and DfID, our research aims to better understand the **dynamics of migration in the Mediterranean region**
- International multi-disciplinary team led by Coventry University, in **collaboration** with the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham in the UK and Birmingham) in partnership with FIERI (Italy), Pfc (Malta), ELIAMEP (Greece) and Yasar University (Turkey)
- First **large-scale, systematic and comparative analysis** of the backgrounds, experiences, aspirations and routes of refugees and migrants who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015
- Interviews undertaken with **500 refugees / migrants** and **111 stakeholders** in nine sites across the four countries between Sept 2015 and Jan 2016
- **Purposive sampling strategy** to ensure that the backgrounds and demographic characteristics of respondents were broadly reflective of wider trends
- **Outputs** → Three Research Briefs, numerous op-eds, final report
- **Policy engagement** → Emerging findings discussed in UK, across Europe, in US, Russia and at UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York

Contribution to the evidence base

- Large number of **reports by international organisations and NGOs** documenting developments in the Mediterranean region (experience, policy)
- Growing number of **first-hand accounts** of the ‘crisis’ from journalists and others, many of whom have followed people as they cross into Europe
- Large body of **academic research** currently in development and/or recently published (including MMRP) to address gaps in data and policy analysis:
 - Research has previously focused on drivers of migration, countries of destination
 - Significant gaps in relation to motivations, aspirations and journeys
 - Lack of comparative data across countries or people from different backgrounds
 - Often driven by, and tied to, abstract categories created by law and policy to contain, and make sense, of migration flows
- Our research unpacks the factors that influence and inform journeys to Europe horizontally and vertically across the four case study countries:
 - **Micro level** – individual characteristics, circumstances, knowledge
 - **Meso level** - social networks, agents / smugglers that facilitate the journey
 - **Macro level** – how macro and meso levels shape / respond to national/regional policies

The decision to move...

- **84% of sea arrivals** in 2015 came from the world's top 10 refugee producing countries, with Syrian nationals representing just over 50% i.e. **this is not a 'migration crisis' but a crisis of refugee protection**
- Although the increase in the scale of flows is partly explained by the deteriorating situation in Syria, **the drivers of migration to Europe are complex and multi-faceted**
- **91% of those interviewed in Greece** said that they had been forced to leave their countries of origin either because the levels of **generalised violence** had become intolerable (Syria, Iraq) or because they had been specifically targeted for their political views in the context of political unrest and conflict
- **Drivers of migration vary by country** → Syria (conflict, ISIS, kidnappings), Afghanistan (conflict, Taliban, ISIS, military conscription in Iran), Eritrea (forced conscription), Iraq (conflict, ISIS). Nearly a third (29%) of respondents talked about ISIS / Daesh
- **66% of those interviewed in Italy and Malta** described threats of violence or persecution as the primary reason for leaving their country of origin but a third (36%) also talked about economic reasons for migration

...and move on

- Many of those who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 left their home countries months or even years beforehand
- **Complexity of routes and the factors that shape the journey to Europe** → rarely a single decision but multiple, often separate decisions made in response to different situations
- Important to differentiate between the **initial drivers** of migration from countries of origin and **factors which propel people onwards**
- For many the primary objective is reaching a place of safety but they also need to find a place to live where they can rebuild a life / livelihood
- **Political instability and conflict as well as kidnapping, and personal experiences of violence** were frequently mentioned as specific factors influencing the **decision to move on**, particularly from Libya, Iran, Sudan
- People moved on from countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iran because they **could not feed their families, or access education, health care or work**
- Clear evidence of a **continuum between 'economic' and 'forced' migration**
- The **longer and more fragmented** the journey, the more difficult it is to **unpack this relationship**

“Three years ago they bombed my house in Aleppo and I lost my father then. My mother and brother have been living in Izmir for the past five months. My mother has lost her mind due to her sadness. After they bombed our house, we moved to another house again in Aleppo. But war started there too. My father was a civil servant and he had a salary. After he died we had nothing.”

Syrian (Kurdish) male, 22 years old

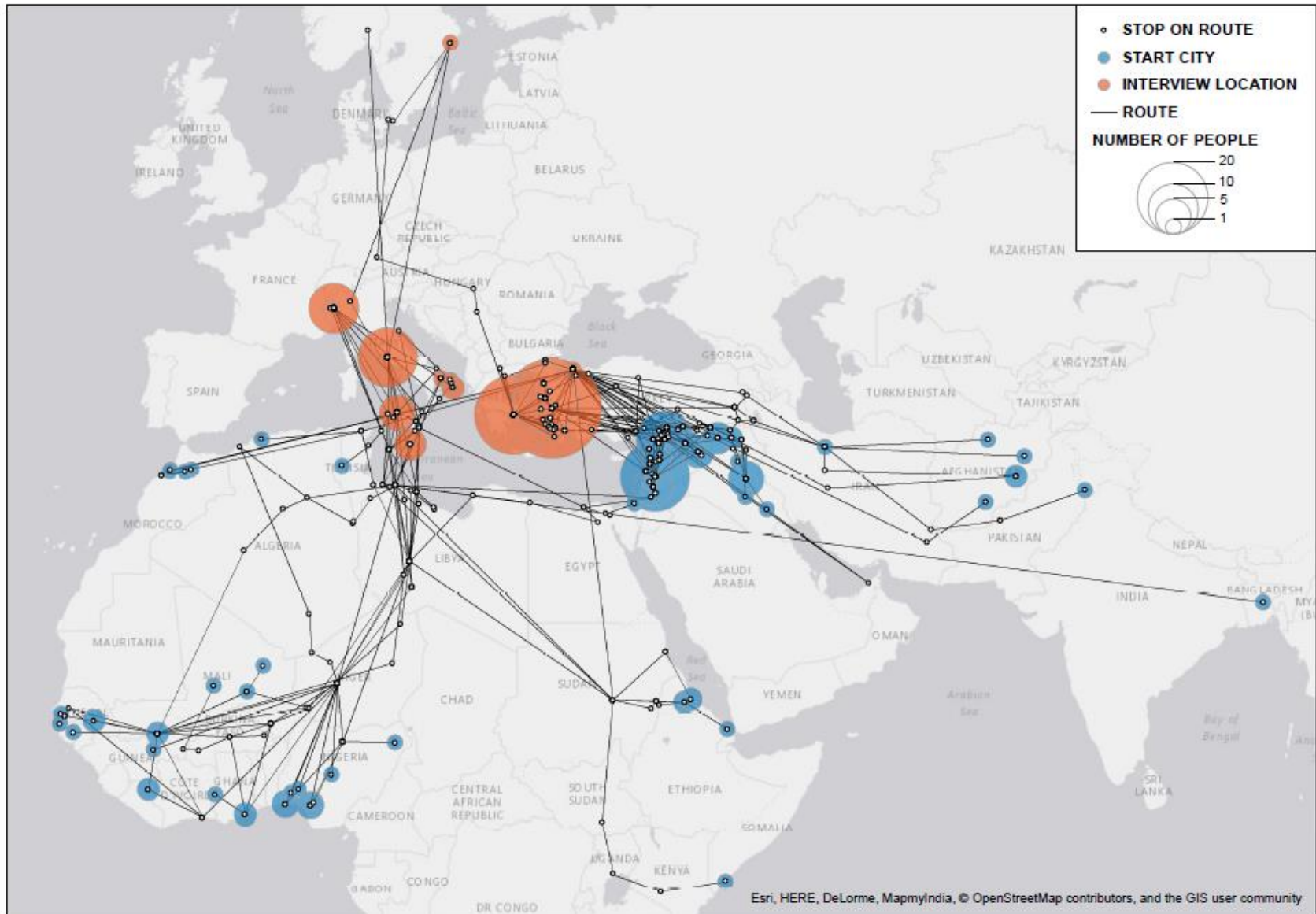
“We were living in Damascus. We left Damascus because we were feeling that we could die at any moment. The regime bombed our house 15 days before we left the country. My husband, who was an electrician, had to quit his job when we lost our house”

Syrian woman, 23 years old

“Life had been hard in Lebanon the past four years. I was living with 6 more people in the house. The rent was expensive. My mother was living in a different area. There were no jobs there. I was living in the centre of Beirut, because there were more jobs there. My life didn't improve all these years there. You cannot build a life there”

Syrian man, 33 years old

Refugee and migrant routes to Europe (n=122)



Implications for EU migration policy

- The **EU policy context shifted constantly during 2015** whilst the research was being undertaken and has changed dramatically in the months since the fieldwork was completed (EU-Turkey deal)
- EU's response to date has been driven, in large part, by a **border-control agenda**
- Whilst there has been a significant fall in the number of people arriving in Europe, less has been done to address the **drivers of primary and secondary migration to Europe**, or the **protection and integration needs of those who are already here** and who continue to arrive through the Central Mediterranean route
- Many of the policy failures are **failures of implementation** (e.g. resettlement, relocation) but also reflect **assumptions about the reasons why people move** and the factors that shape their longer-term migration trajectories as well as their journeys to Europe
- Current policies are based on assumptions about the relationship between 'push' and 'pull' factors but **mixed motivations** are a feature of both migration flows and the lives of individual refugees and migrants

- The extent to which **policies intended to deter refugees and migrants** have the effects intended or assumed is challenged by the **ad hoc** and dynamic decision making process
- **Deterrence and containment policies** without access to protection, resettlement, humanitarian assistance or addressing the rights of those who have moved to other countries will simply drive demand for the services of smugglers
- There is a need for **nuanced, tailored and targeted policy responses** which reflect diverse, stratified and increasingly complex flows

For further information visit our website
www.medmig.info



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