

# IRMA Migration System 3: Afghanistan

«Europe is elsewhere:  
Afghan migration to  
Greece»

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# The profile of Afghan Migration

*“multidirectional, cross-border movements and the ongoing, cyclical nature of migration blur the boundaries between ‘refugee’ and ‘voluntary migrant’”  
(Monsutti, 2006)*

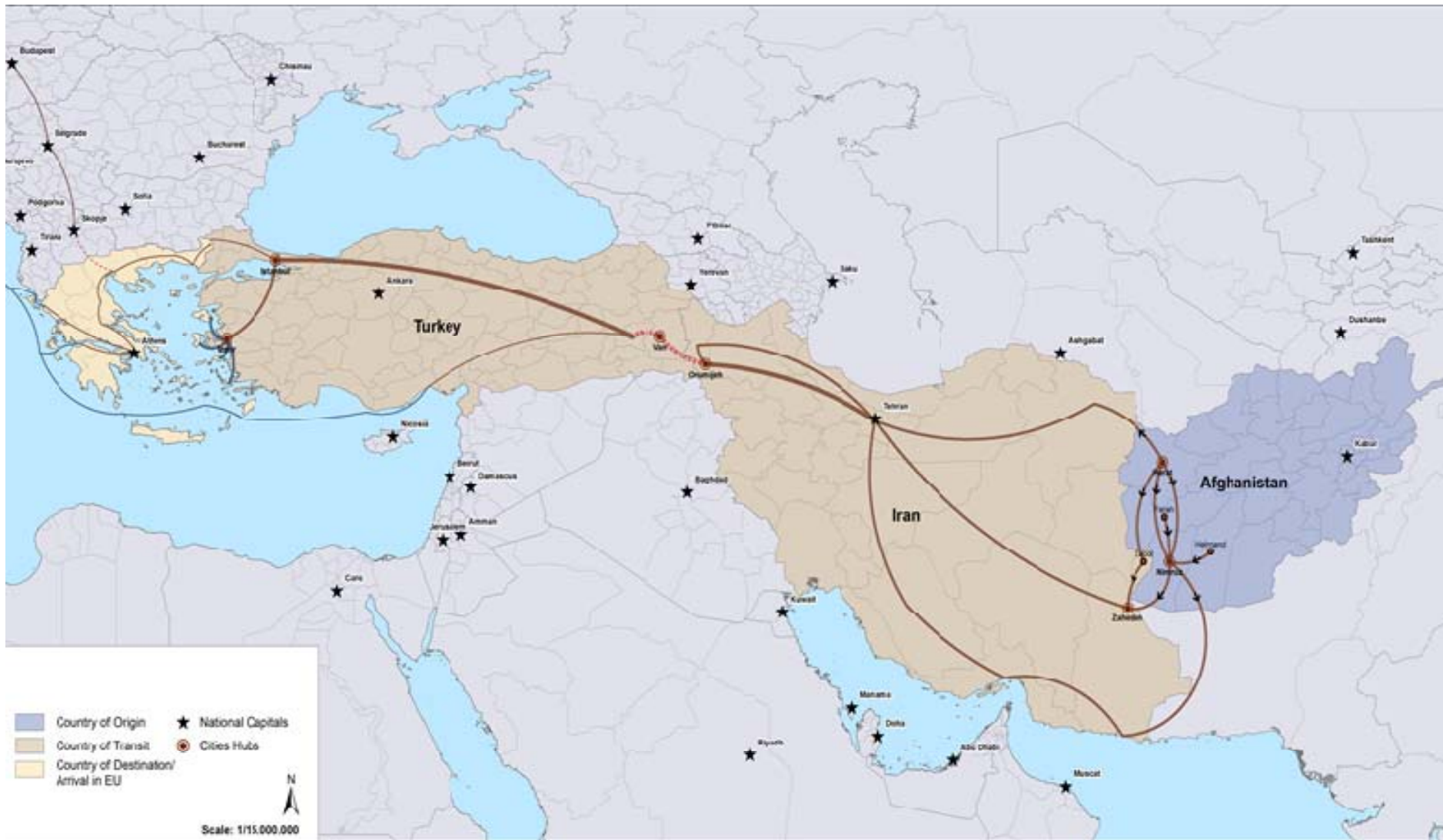
- Originate from Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan
- Initially men → shift to unaccompanied minors, families and women with children
- Almost entirely without identity documents, many unregistered in Afghanistan

# Motives for Migration/Destination

- **Motives: Asylum**
  - Political Context (Taliban, withdrawal of Allied Forces)
  - Deportations from Iran and Pakistan (secondary movement)
  - Employment (Not the primary motive)
  - Education
- **Destinations for asylum:**

<b>Germany</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Turkey-Iran</b>	<b>4</b>

# The Journey



# En route to Europe: the smuggler

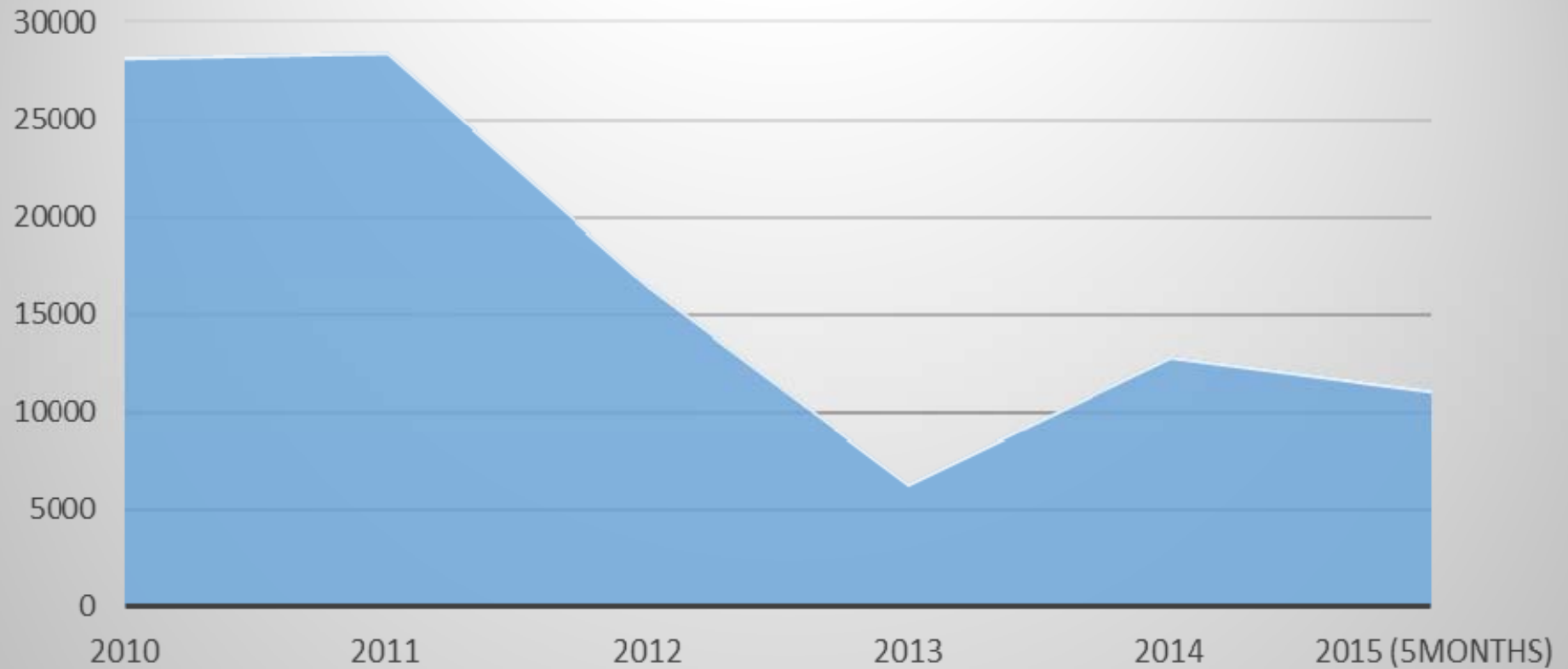
*“It was the smuggler who told us that things are difficult in Greece, unlike other countries like Germany”  
(couple, 27& 37 years old)*

*“.. well the decision [to migrate] is mine, I decide. But you have to listen to the smuggler because they know the way. **They lie a lot, of course they lie and we know that but we don't also have another chance eh?** This is it for us; we have to listen to the smuggler. You just have to follow them.” (male, 19 years old)*

# En route to Europe: the role of Turkey

- Traditional destination/hosting country
- Time spent in waiting
- Employment *“the difference is here you don’t have to search for food in the garbage. Here you can find a job, save some money.”* (male, 40 years old)
- Information hub
- Knowledge of the risks ahead (through social media, smugglers)
- Exercise of agency through choosing smuggler and routes

## Afghan Apprehensions (all borders)



*All data from the Hellenic Police (2015)*

# Arrival to Greece

*“In Afghanistan I had heard there was a country called Greece and it is like a door, you go through it to get to Europe” (male, 25 years old)*

- Law 3907/2011 (new asylum service, first reception service)
- Increase and sea and land border patrols
- Operation Shield- shift of 1800 border guards to the Greek Turkish land border
- Border Fence
- Operation Xenios Zeus (show your papers policy)
- Extensive and indiscriminate detention (6 pre-departure centres, 7500 in detention)
- Emphasis on returns (voluntary and forced)



# Detention & Return

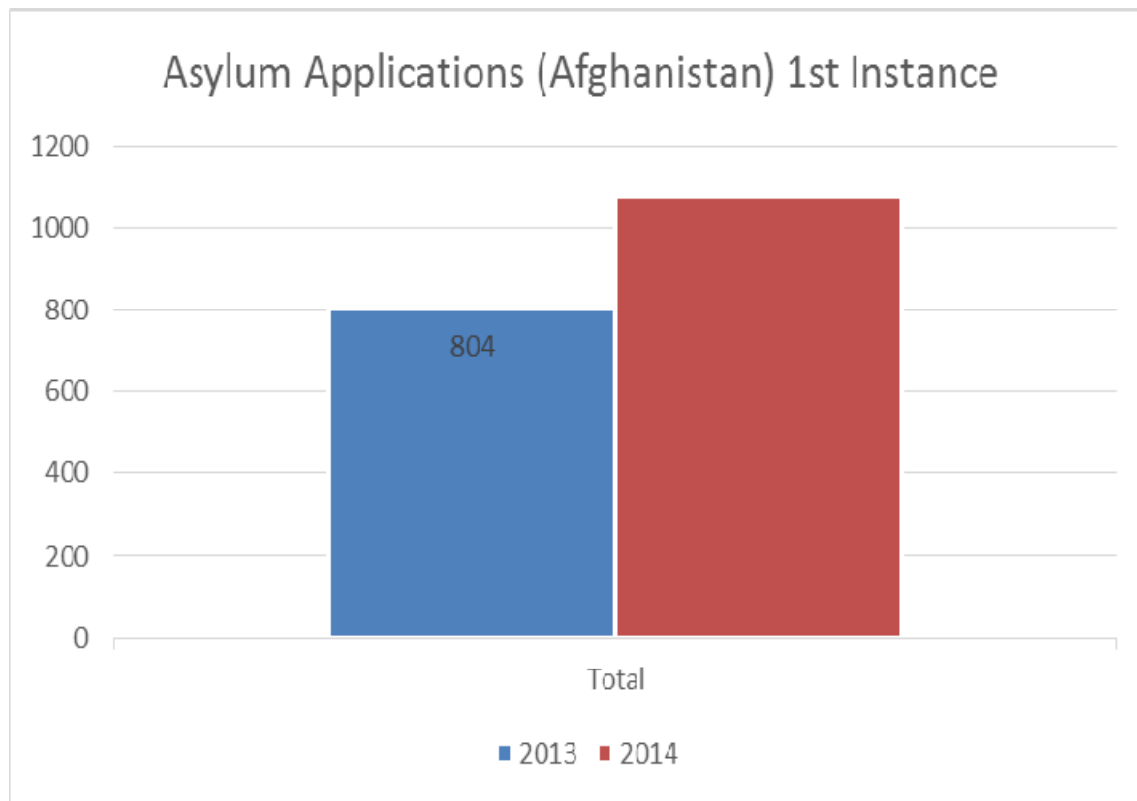
- high levels of confusion and lack of information
- fear of time spent in limbo.
- voluntary return presented as the salient option
- **Asylum claims in detention=time starts from zero**
- **Alternative option: voluntary return with IOM**



*“look at me in here, I am not a criminal and look where they keep me? Ok I am illegal, I have no papers but I am not a criminal. Ahead is better. Ok I am illegal but here everything is closed. They open the doors twice a day. It is not like this there[Europe]...there you can at least walk outside” (male,18 years old)*

# Impact of measures

*“Before, it was ok to be without papers but now if you don’t have documents they send you back. They arrested and sent to Athens three months ago 45 people-Albanians, Afghans and Pakistanis-everyone was returned. They are back in Afghanistan!” (male, 23 years old)*



## Strategies of survival:

- in urban settings movement with children to avoid detention
- women sent alone or with children to N. Europe
- Transit (often **alone**) via western Balkan route

# Conclusions

- Afghan migration = a complex web of socio-economic, political and personal factors that impact differently each individual.
- Asylum, is holistic protection and the first step towards a new life.
- Greece was and remains a transit destination, en route to Europe.
- Detention & Deportation increased the waiting time in Turkey, pushed for involuntary returns and further urged migrants underground
- The dream to reach N.Europe in search of asylum did not alter, neither the decision to migrate.

# Thank you for your attention!

Περισσότερα για το IRMA – Η Διακυβέρνηση της Μη Νόμιμης Μετανάστευσης: Κράτη, Δρώντες και Μεσάζοντες, στην ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση: <http://irma.eliamep.gr/>

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More on IRMA – Governing Irregular Migration: States, Actors and Intermediaries, visit its website” <http://irma.eliamep.gr/>

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