

Assessing the Cost-effectiveness of Irregular Migration Control Policies in Greece

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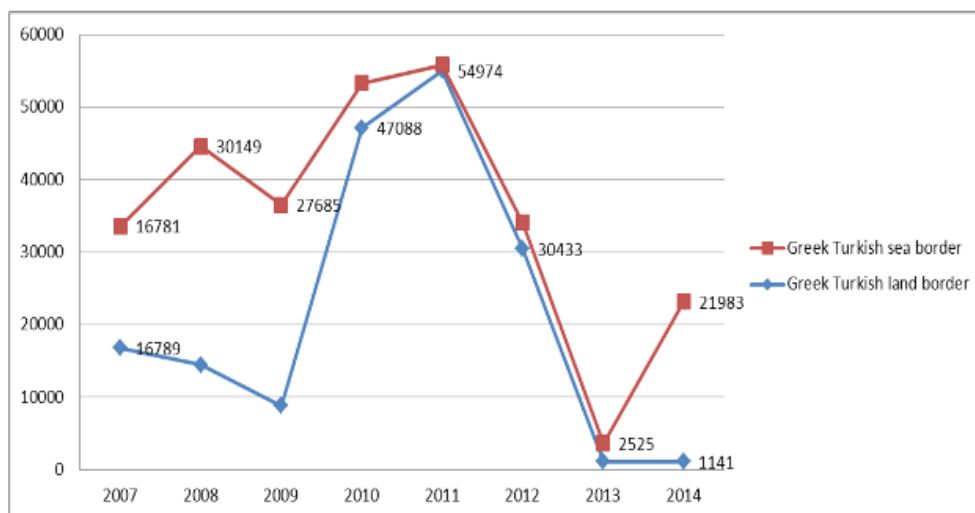
Irregular Migration / Asylum Management in a Volatile Geopolitical Context

Greece has been characterised by relatively high irregular migrant population stocks and flows during the past 25 years. Of particular concern have been the Greek Turkish land and sea borders that bear the brunt of irregular migration and asylum seeking pressures from neighbouring and far away Asian and African countries.

Migration and asylum pressures at Greece's and the EU's external borders are strongly

influenced by geopolitical developments in the region since the Arab spring in 2011 and particularly the implosion of the Libyan regime, the conflict in Syria as well as overall instability and conflict in the Middle East. Arrivals at the Greek Turkish sea borders had peaked in 2008-2009 but are dramatically rising again during 2014. The Greek Turkish land border by contrast was heavily under pressure in 2010-2011 but has now largely been abandoned.

Chart 1: Evolution of Flows along the Greek Turkish Borders 2008- 2014 (Aug.)



Note: data refer to apprehensions, not to people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice. Emphasis is added by the authors to signal peaks of apprehensions at different borders.

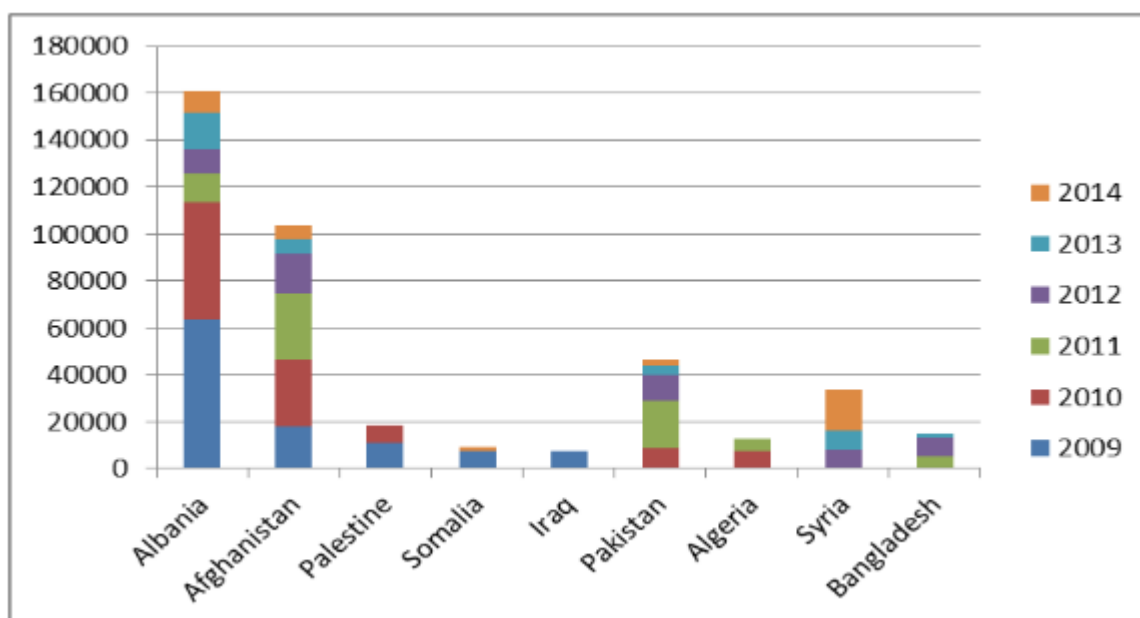
Source: Greek police data, www.astynomia.gr

The flows are mixed in terms of composition; young men but also families and unaccompanied children, people who flee war and political unrest as well as people migrating mainly for economic reasons. Syrians have emerged as the largest nationality group arriving at the Greek Turkish border in 2013-2014 while Afghans occupied the top position in 2011-2012. Pakistanis have consistently been among the five largest nationality groups but their numbers

have sharply declined from nearly 20,000 in 2011 to approx. 2,000 in 2014.

Sadly, Greece has hit the headlines for illegal pushbacks of small vessels in the Aegean, and overnight refoulements across the Evros river, but also for grimy detention centers and violence that went unpunished (see [ProAsyl 2007](#); [Human Rights Watch 2009](#); [MSF 2014](#); [Convictions by the European Court of Human Rights](#)).

Chart 2: Top 5 Nationality Groups as regards Apprehensions at the Borders, 2009-2014 (Aug.)



Source: Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen, www.astynomia.gr for all years cited here.

Financing Irregular Migration Controls

The management of irregular arrivals is combined with the particularly heavy burden of the financial crisis. As a result, Greece has had to rely extensively on EU funds, in order to implement its migration control policy.

The authorities have at times provided figures, such as the recent announcement by the Ministry of Mercantile Marine that [sea patrols in the Aegean](#) cost 63 million euros in 2013. Yet in the absence of a systematic assessment of the

cost effectiveness of the policies, such figures are of little use.

A closer look at the distribution of resources raises also important questions: On one hand, Greece has trouble **financially sustaining an effective asylum system**. During its first year of operation (2013-2014) the new Asylum Service has had to also rely on voluntary work and assistance by UNHCR to cover its needs for **interpreters**. Greece has also been unable to

run [adequate shelters for migrant children](#), as a result of which many are left to survive in destitution and homelessness.

On the other hand, 5 million euros were set aside to erect a 10-km fence along the Greek-

Turkish border. Resources were also found to cover the [running costs of Amygdaleza pre-removal center](#), an 'exemplary' detention facility which costs 10.5 million euros per year.

Aims of this policy paper

Questions indeed arise as to the overall efficiency of Greece's irregular migration control and asylum management as well as to the cost-effectiveness of the policies implemented. This policy paper assesses the human and material resources invested in the management of irregular migration within the timeframe of 2008-2013, answering three questions:

How much do irregular migration control policies in Greece actually cost?

Are current policies cost-effective when compared against their outputs and outcomes?

Are there any alternative policy recommendations that could be more cost-effective?

The MIDAS project gathered and brought together a [wide range of data](#) that has been hitherto unknown thus making an important contribution to the policy and political debate. In terms of policy analysis, our ambition in this paper is modest. We do not go as far as challenging Greece's, and consequently the EU's policy objectives altogether but rather accept the current policy objectives as granted and review the manner in which the authorities seek to achieve them. The MIDAS project solely explores the financial dimension of the Greek migration policy and seeks to put forward policy recommendations in line with international human rights law that will benefit both migrants and the host society.

Methodology

MIDAS is a 10-month project carried out by the ELIAMEP Migration Team between January-October 2014. In the absence of previous studies on the cost-effectiveness of Greece's migration policy, much time and energy was spent to gather information that lied by large in a fragmented manner or was simply unavailable. Once all main funding schemes of Greece's migration policy had been identified, we contacted all of Greece's main sponsors to gather the necessary data and discussed the data with key stakeholders.

We worked primarily on the basis of written requests for information, in order to secure the accuracy of the figures provided. These were normally divided as follows: (a) cataloguing (list of operations/measures undertaken in the period 2008-2013), (b) costs (human and

material resources deployed, expenditures), (c) direct outputs and outcomes (statistics on detainees, asylum claims, returns, apprehensions) and (d) evaluation (questions addressing effectiveness of measures against costs and in the overall Greek context). On many occasions our initial requests were followed up by further clarifications, either because not all questions had been answered, or because there was a need for further clarification of the data provided.

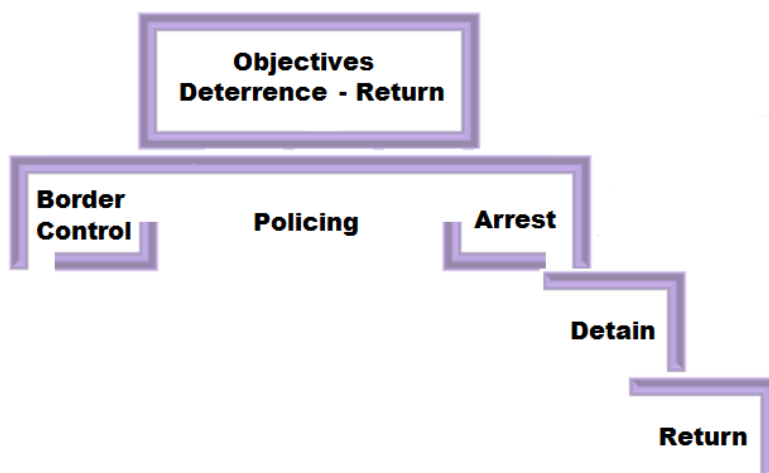
In addition to fieldwork, an extended overview of primary sources was undertaken: Parliamentary questions, Greece's annual reports before the European Refugee Fund, the European Return Fund and the External Borders Fund, Frontex' financial reports, the EEA Grants Memorandum and other EU documents

Greece's Migration Control Policy Objectives

In the context of Greece's irregular migration management during the period 2008-2013, both practice and political promulgations agree that the ultimate goal has been one: to 'clear' the country from its irregular migrant population.

On this basis, the Greek authorities designed their policies along two main intertwined objectives: deterrence and return. To achieve this objective, Greece designed a three-pillar policy they may be best described as follows:

Figure 1: Greece's Irregular Migration Strategy



“What is happening this moment is that everybody who gets arrested will be detained. They no longer have the choice to live on the streets. They will be detained and deported. If they opt for voluntary return.”

Skai TV Channel, 6 August 2012, Abstracts of [Interview with the Minister of Citizen Protection](#), our translation)

Even though in 2010 Greece designed a National Action Plan, which was revised in 2013, that foresaw a series of reception and integration policies and objectives in the context of asylum and migration management, these were not prioritised during the period 2008-2013. Both in terms of resource distribution and implementation pace, most of these measures are still in the making or in search for funding.

In terms of short- and long-term objectives, Greece's policy approach sought to achieve both objectives of deterrence and return in an integrated manner.

In the short term,

- **Border management aimed primarily at stopping migrants from entering the country.**
- **Apprehensions at the borders and the interior aimed at detecting trespassers with a view to immediately return them.**
- **Detention was a tool aimed at enhancing returns.**

In the long term, the aim of the whole strategy was to persuade migrants to avoid Greece altogether.

Sponsors and Costs

In the period 2008-2013, Greece's asylum and irregular migration control policy entailed expenditures of at least half a billion euros. Greece's policy was covered at a 75%-100% rate by three main external sponsors:

- European Commission (SOLID Framework)
- Frontex
- Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland in agreement with the European Commission (EEA Grants Framework)

Figure 2: Main Sources of Funding of Greek Irregular Migration Control and Asylum Policy

Figure 2a. Direct External Financial Contribution to Greece 2008-2013

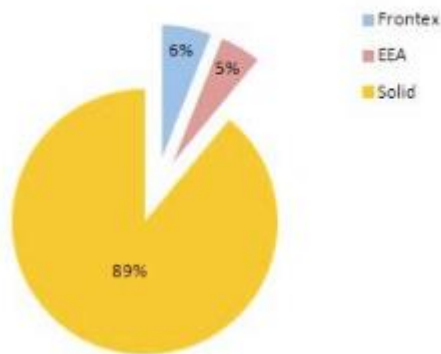
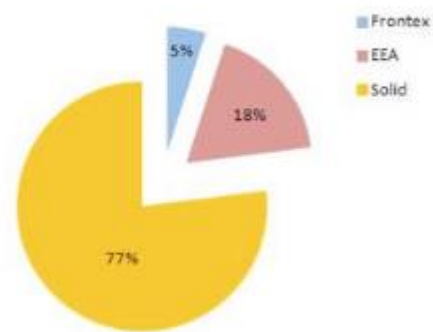


Figure 2b. Indirect External Financial Contribution to Greece 2008-2013



Overall Cost Assessment

During the period 2008-2013, Greece received in terms of direct grants a minimum total of 432 million euros. In terms of indirect financial contributions the sums become higher. The overall cost of managing the irregular migrant population within these funding schemes has been for Greece and all its main sponsors (EU, Frontex, EEA) a minimum of half a billion euros, out of which 15% went into the asylum system, 30% in return policies and 55% in external border management.

The emphasis is placed on 'minimum', since additional sums allocated from the national

budget are not always known or not easy to calculate. For instance, the Ministry of Mercantile Marine announced recently that it spent in 2013 an estimated 63 million euros in order to safeguard the East Aegean Sea. As regards the Greek Police, however, an analogous estimate would be difficult, if not impossible, as tasks related to daily controls in public places and arrest-and-detain measures in the streets of major cities have in recent years been integrated into the regular duties of police officers. Likewise, NGO voluntary work is not reflected in the above-described figures, as it

would be difficult to estimate in monetary terms.

This policy paper investigates two areas: migration controls at the border and in the

mainland, and detention, with a view to assessing the specific policy choices, strategy and cost effectiveness of Greece's irregular migration policy.

Migration Controls

In the period 2008-2013 Greece's policy to tackle irregular migration clearly prioritised measures of border policing and arrest. Detection and arrest were thereby viewed as the first step to a successful migration policy, the primary purpose of which was to reduce the irregular migrant population. Not only was most funding absorbed in this area, but Greece delved deep into its national resources, in order to secure their speedy completion.

Particularly since 2012, the Greek authorities followed two major courses of actions: first,

they reinforced the Greek-Turkish land border, which was at the time the main entry point of irregular migrants into the Greek territory; second, they sought to 'clean up' the interior of Greece from all migrants staying irregularly in the country. The afore-mentioned included the erection of a fence along the Greek Turkish border and the launch of Operation Shield in the region; in the interior, Operation Xenios Zeus started, which was a 'stop and search' policy targeting irregular migrants.

Fencing the Border

The idea to construct a physical barrier along the 206-kilometre land border with Turkey analogous to the fence between the US-Mexico borders was first announced by the Ministry of Citizen Protection in January 2011, at a time when Frontex's Operation Rabbit was nearing its end.

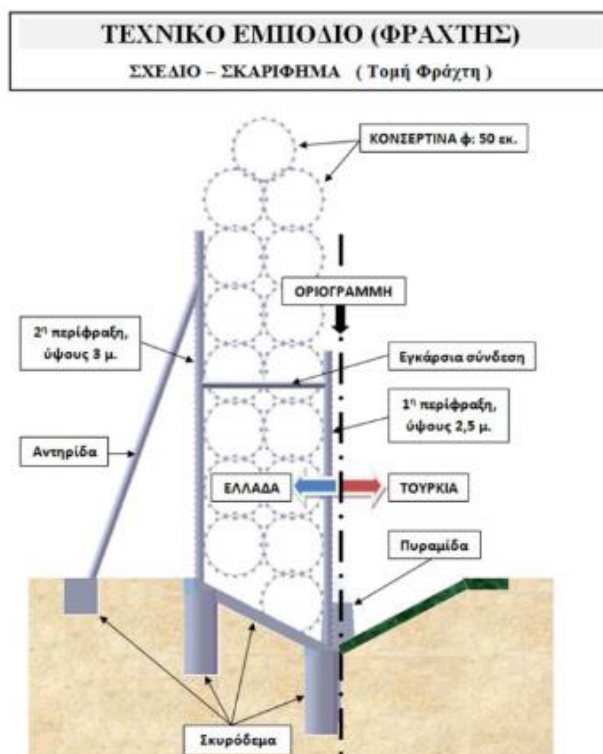
While Greece and Turkey were naturally separated by the Evros river, there is a 10km land strip through which migrants can cross by land. This had become an increasingly popular entry point. Erecting a fence, according to the Greek government, would not only give a final solution to the continuous influx of irregular migrants through the region, but also have a fundamentally 'symbolic' value; it would send out the message that Greece was taking its border management seriously. The construction of the fence started in October 2011 and was

completed by December 2012. The initial proposal foresaw the [construction of a 12.5 km fence](#) at an estimated cost of 4.8 million euros, later raised to 5.5 million euros.

An early attempt to draw funding from the External Borders Fund was rejected by the European Commission. The [final construction](#) is 10,365 metres long and runs along the north-eastern side of the Greek-Turkish borders, between the villages of Kastanies and Nea Vyssa. It consists of [two cement walls with barbed wire in between and has an average height of 3m](#). It runs exclusively on Greek soil and is alleged to be at its closest only one meter away from the Turkish border.

In terms of cost, a private company undertook the erection of the fence at a price of 3.16 million euros, paid exclusively by national resources.

Figure 3: Design of the Fence at the Greek Turkish Land Border



Human Resources for Border Control: Operation Shield (*Aspida*)

Three months before the completion of the Evros fence, Operation Shield (*Aspida*) was launched. Its main purpose was to control and deter irregular arrivals by reinforcing the physical presence of patrol officers at the Greek-Turkish land border. Between August 2012 and February 2013, nearly 1,900 police officers were deployed along the border. Contrary to the Evros fence, which covered only 5% of the overall land border between Greece and Turkey, Operation Shield was spread along the 206 km river line. While most officers were assigned border management duties, part of the staff were assigned reception and screening duties, including asylum management and informing irregular immigrants about their rights. Upon completion of the first phase, Operation Shield was extended until June 2013 and has since continued.

The initial phase, lasting 6 months, cost a total

of 16 million euros. Its 5-month extension until June 2013 cost a further 8 million euros, raising thus [the total cost to 24 million euros](#). As the number of irregular migrants entering through the specific land strip decreased, the number of police officers was subsequently reduced to a half. To cover the costs, Greece drew funding at 75% from the External Borders fund as well as its own national resources. While the salaries of the police officers were borne by the Greek State, functional expenditures (tanker truck vehicles, fuel, operational uniforms, special camouflage tents) were co-financed by the External Borders Fund.

During the period 2010-2012, the overall cost of border control at the Greek Turkish land border is estimated at **67 million euros** taken from both EU and national resources.

Chart 3. Known Costs of Border Control at Greek-Turkish Land Borders, 2010-2012

Source	Item	Cost
External Borders Fund (incl. national contribution)	Technical Equipment/ Technology/ Infrastructure	41 million
Frontex	Poseidon Land* Rabbit Operation	18.5 million 4.4 million
National Resources	Evros fence	3.1. million
TOTAL		67 million

**hosted by Greece and Bulgaria*

Assessing the Cost-Effectiveness of Border Controls in Overall Reducing Arrivals and Irregular Migration Pressures

If we assess the effectiveness of these measures in terms of absolute numbers, then this was indeed an effective policy, as it drastically reduced the number of irregular arrivals through the specific land strip.

If we assess the effectiveness of this policy in relative numbers, then it appears less successful, because the reduction in arrivals through the land border was accompanied with a parallel rise in entries through the Greek

Turkish sea border. While the increase was moderate in 2012-2013, it has dramatically gone up in 2014. Indeed the fence seems to have re-routed the flows rather than having drastically reduced them altogether. Erecting a fence and investing in particular entry points, can be effective in reducing entries and pressures through that specific gate but pressure and arrivals are usually re-directed to other entry points.

Policy Recommendations

If Greece's primary policy objective is to reduce its irregular migrant population by deterring irregular arrivals, then there are also alternative tools available such as awareness-raising campaigns. For instance, Greece can appoint migration officers at diplomatic delegations abroad and distribute through NGOs both in Greece and abroad film documentaries. There is often little awareness among prospective irregular migrants before starting their journey that they can hardly hope to regularise their stay and legitimately work in Europe.

Controls within the Country: Operation *Xenios Zeus*

Operation Xenios Zeus was launched almost simultaneously with Operation Shield aiming at matching border controls with enforcement at the interior. At the time it was [estimated](#) that 1 out of 4 migrants residing in Greece was on an irregular status. Operation 'Xenios Zeus' began on 2 August 2012. On 16 July 2014 it was [incorporated into the standard police procedures](#) and patrols and re-named into Operation 'Theseus'.

Operation Xenios Zeus comprised a series of regular round-up operations carried out in areas with a high concentration of irregular migrants, including street and house searches. It was impressive both in terms of geographic coverage (three major cities) and intensity (initially on a daily basis, every person who looked 'foreign' was stopped and checked).

Approximately 65,000 people were checked from the beginning of the operation in August until 24 December 2012, of whom only 4,128

were arrested because they were found to be illegally staying in the country. The Operation was heavily criticised by the [European Council for Refugees and Exiles](#) for the risks it entailed for asylum seekers.

Taking into account the thousands of police officers initially deployed and the hours spent to operate these round ups and subsequent controls, a sweeping operation to eventually shrink the irregular migrant population does not appear to be a cost-effective policy tool. In 2013, the apprehensions completed within the context of Operation Xenios Zeus represented only 3.2% of all apprehensions of irregular migrants in Greece. This kind of an operation might be effective in combating criminality, as the Greek Police often underscores; however, in terms of irregular migration management it is not, as only 6% of the third country nationals checked were found to be undocumented.

Policy Recommendations

More comprehensive and accurate data collection to allow better evaluation of policies: If arrest is Greece's first pillar in securing the return of irregular migrants to their countries of origins, it is important that more accurate data are kept to monitor the final outcomes of its apprehension policies.

Investment in forged documents identification will cut down time during round up operations. Under the current scheme, in the course of a round up operations all migrants are gathered together, transferred to police headquarters and their documents are checked there. This is a time-consuming and inefficient practice for both the people checked and the officers involved. Funds could be invested in forged documentation technology.

Appropriate training of police officers involved in such operations: The authorities should invest in screening and linguistic training so that identification becomes faster. This would cut down on the time of the operation and save resources which could be spent elsewhere (eg. regular police duties to combat criminality).

Detention

The systematic use of detention has been increasingly regarded as the most effective tool to secure the return of the arrested migrant to his/her home country. In the period 2008-2013, detention, the second pillar in Greece's migration policy, became Greece's flagship to manage irregular migrants once they have crossed the borders.

Among the most radical changes were the introduction of indiscriminate and indefinite

detention into the Greek legal order; at the same time, an unprecedented financial investment in improving and expanding detention facilities was undertaken. The External Borders Fund and European Return Fund were Greece's main sponsors within this new policy course, as the construction and running costs of most facilities were co-financed by the EU at a 75% rate. Nonetheless, detention has proven a particularly costly enterprise.

Detention as Punishment

From the perspective of international human rights law, detaining an irregular migrant in the context of removal processes is considered a particularly harsh measure that is only exceptionally allowed under very specific requirements. In line with this fundamental rule, Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive) lays down a particular restrictive framework when it comes to the use of detention in irregular migration policies.

As Directive 2008/115/EC requires, the use of detention must be limited (as a last resort measure); it needs to be of the shortest duration possible and can only be maintained as long as removal arrangements are in progress and in any case, it cannot exceed 18 months; the conditions must be appropriate - detained irregular migrants must be kept in specialised facilities and be treated in a humane and dignified manner.

The Greek legislative framework on detention is very much in line with the EU common standards. There are currently three different regimes in place that regulate the detention of irregular migrants on the basis of the following

categories:

- a. irregular migrants arrested upon entry into the Greek territory
- b. irregular migrants arrested within the interior of Greece, (this includes rejected asylum-seekers)
- c. asylum seekers

There is however a **significant divergence however between the letter of the law and its implementation.**

Throughout the period 2008-2013, the detention of irregular migrants was both widespread and marked by a growing trend to circumvent the maximum allowed period of detention. Greece was repeatedly convicted by the European Court of Human Rights both with regard to the conditions of detention and the arbitrary and automatic manner in which migrants were deprived of their liberty. Nonetheless, Greece upheld its detention policy.

In 2013, the **use of systematic and indefinite detention became also formally Greece's policy priority.**

“Our aim is that *every* illegal migrant, unless the competent authorities decide that he is entitled to international protection, will be detained until he is returned to his home country.”

A few months later the concept of indefinite detention was also formally introduced into the

Greek legal order by a rather controversial advisory opinion of the Council of State.

The aim of this policy of indefinite and indiscriminate detention has been two-fold:

(1) to **increase the return rate**, in particular voluntary return among detained migrants

(2) to **discourage irregular arrivals in the long term**.

Assessing the Cost-Effectiveness of Detention

According to the statistics of the last three (3) years (revised Hellenic National Action Plan, 2013:53), approximately one third of all migrants apprehended and with a return decision at hand, continued to reside in the country, without claiming asylum and without being subject to return procedures. It was believed that the prolongation and expansion of detention would increase the efficiency of returns and reduce this percentage of undocumented migrants who simply “disappeared”.

From an economic perspective, effectiveness is not equivalent to 100% enforcement. For each law, there is an “optimal amount of enforcement” which depends on a series of variables: the cost of apprehension, the cost of carrying out the punishment (e.g. imprisonment is more costly compared to fines) and the response of the offender to the enforcement (deterrent effect of conviction). As Gary Becker, a famous economist, argued 40 years ago an [optimal policy equilibrium](#) requires that the costs entailed outbalance the social damages caused by the crime (e.g. loss of society's earnings). **Deterrence alone, is thus not a sufficient reason to counterbalance all other costs;** and detention as such weighs heavily within the scale, because it is very costly and causes losses not only to the offender but to

society as a whole. As a rule, milder punishments should therefore be preferred.

Greece's indiscriminate detention policy has a low cost-effectiveness in several aspects. The average cost of detaining an irregular migrant in Greece is **16 euros per day**. On the basis of the current capacity of pre-removal centres (4,985), detention costs Greece (and the EU) a minimum total of **28,713,600 EUR** per year (excluding special holding facilities, police stations and border guard units). If we now take into account that the current aim is to create 7,000-7,500 positions (Commission Staff Working Document on the Assessment of the Implementation of the Greek Action Plan, 2014:14), then the annual costs of implementing detention reaches **43,200,000 EUR per year**.

This calculation shows that the current detention policy exceeds Greece's available annual budget under the European Return Fund (In 2013, Greece's return policy (pre-removal centres and return operations) ran a total budget of 46 million euros including both EU funding and national resources). This means that Greece will have to secure funding from other sources, something which does not seem likely under the current circumstances. The construction and renovation of pre-removal centres has thus far cost 20 million euros. (Commission Staff Working Document, 2014:15).

Alternatives to Detention

Screening and First Reception Centres

The concept of Screening Centres is relatively new. It was introduced together with the concept of the First Reception Centres. Screening Centres are not detention centres within the strict sense of the word. They aim at carrying out identifications processes and establishing the needs and status of a migrant. First Reception Centres aim at providing newcomers with first aid (food, medical aid,

information); new arrivals stay for an average of 12 days and in exceptional circumstances for 25 days. Their purpose is to identify vulnerable categories, offer first assistance and care, information on asylum and act as the first point of reference for the irregular arrival to the country.

There are currently two screening centers on the islands of Samos and Chios.

Open Accommodation

Open accommodation centres are currently primarily targeted at unaccompanied minors, families and vulnerable categories (victims of torture). Some facilities are also open to adult women and one of those may also shelter men. The pre-condition for tenants is however that they are registered asylum seekers and are in their majority they are run by NGOs.

If we take as a test case the accommodation program of the NGO Praxis, it currently runs apartments that can host up to four people each. The total capacity is 130 persons. The average overall cost of hosting a person stands at 9-12 euro per day. Accommodation is of a temporary nature (6 months on average), as it aims at aiding the person find employment and

private accommodation. At the same time, if required, the person may seek the assistance of social workers. The approach is holistic in the sense that it not only aids the person financially. The current overall capacity of such centres is in total 1,093 places, funded by EEA countries' special grants, the European Refugee Fund and national resources.

Thus a combination of first reception/screening and open or semi-open centres appears to offer equivalent or actually better value for money, is in line with national and European law, and certainly is more appropriate than detention for asylum-seekers and vulnerable categories of irregular migrants.

Policy Recommendations

Screening of individual cases: it is unnecessary to detain indiscriminately the irregular migrants that the authorities come across in order to implement an effective migration and asylum policy. Such an approach results in unnecessary expenditures. Asylum-seekers for instance, cannot be deported for as long as their claims are being examined; keeping them in detention during this period is not only inhuman but also very costly. There is thus an urgent need for individualised screening of all detained irregular migrants/asylum seekers. In addition, the capacity of first reception and screening centres should be increased. European funds should be directed to this purpose as an important policy priority.

Surveillance schemes alternative to detention: Pilot schemes have been tried in Belgium, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom but also Australia and the USA. While state authorities have been often reluctant to adopt such schemes, the overall assessment is positive.

Caseworker scheme-Investment in early legal advice: irregular migrants and asylum-seekers often rely on false information provided by the smugglers. Early legal advice, preferably through personal contact with an assigned caseworker, can result in quicker and more durable decisions, resulting in overall savings.

Investment in language courses: In many EU Member States, teaching to an irregular migrant the national language is a priority. Not only does this cut down on the cost of translators, but it also speeds up the administrative procedure, as the migrant is able to communicate in the context of daily interactions. In addition, it facilitates integration in cases where regularization eventually takes place.

Greece could adopt such measures and seek the financial support of the European Refugee and the European Return Fund rather than mainly targeting the External Border fund's assistance.

Returns

The most significant change in the period 2008-2013 was the investment by Greece in developing a return policy, a component of Greece's irregular migration control strategy which had been overlooked in previous years. At a legislative level, the transposition of the Returns Directive introduced into the Greek order the 'returns' procedure, as opposed to mere expulsion. At a policy level, the IOM assumed a pivotal role in aiding migrants return to their home countries.

With the financial support of three different funding instruments (EEA Grants, Return Fund, and some support from the UK Border Agency) the IOM organised most of Greece's voluntary returns in the course of 2012-2013. Among the most controversial moves was the involvement of the IOM in offering the option of voluntary return to detained migrants, supporting thus indirectly Greece's indefinite detention policy; a move that was not received with much sympathy by civil society organisations.

Readmission, Expulsion and Voluntary Returns

The [Greek legal system](#) currently foresees three ways in which a migrant may be removed from the country:

(a) 'immediate return', applicable to irregular migrants seeking to cross the borders (art. 83, par. 2, law 3386/2005)

(b) expulsion procedure, applicable to irregular migrants arrested upon entering the country (art. 76-83, law 3386/2005)

(c) return process, applicable to irregular migrants who reside in the country irregularly

The physical removal of an irregular migrant may be carried out in four ways:

(a) readmission

(b) forced return

(c) voluntary return

(d) assisted voluntary return.

Direct outputs and direct costs of Return Procedures

In terms of direct outputs, all removals of third country nationals in the period 2008-2013 are summarized as follows:

Table 3: Readmissions>Returns 2008-2013

Year	Apprehensions	Readmissions	Returns (voluntary and forced)	Percentage of removals v. apprehensions
2008	146,337	48,252	22,703	48%
2009	126,145	43,085	21,655	51.3%
2010	132,524	35,129	19,100	40.9%
2011	99,368	5,922	13,253	19.2%
2012	76,878	4,759	20,473	32.8%
2013	43,002	7,533	16,490	55.8%
TOTAL	624,254	144,680	113,674	41.3%

Source: Data provided by the Greek Police, 24 June 2014

Table 4: Forced and Voluntary Returns 2008-2013

Year	Expulsions	Voluntary/Assisted Voluntary Returns	Annual Returns (voluntary and forced)
2008	20,555	--	22,703
2009	20,342	--	21,655
2010	17,340	337	19,100
2011	8,741	2,607	13,253
2012	6,798	11,526	20,473
2013	8,780	9,962	16,490
TOTAL	82,556	24,432	113,674

Source: Data provided by the Greek Police, 1 April 2014 and 24 June 2014

The most common nationalities in terms of voluntary returns operated under the IOM were Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq and Morocco.

In absolute numbers, in the period 2011-2013, when all types of removal processes were operative, a total of **68,340** migrants were in some way removed from the Greek territory (50,216 returns, 18,214 readmissions). Nearly one fourth (26%) of all irregular migrants were

removed via the readmission procedure.

During the period 2011-2013, voluntary returns accounted for 47% of all returned third country nationals, against 53% of forced returns. In the period 2012-2013, however, the share of voluntary returns has increased to 58% of the total. This signals a positive trend where voluntary returns are prioritised and acquire more effectiveness.

Assessing the Cost-effectiveness of Different Types of Return

In terms of [cost-effectiveness](#), the available data indicate that forced return via charter flight is the most expensive type of return, both in terms of cost and in terms of human resources deployed; voluntary returns are in general less costly and bureaucratically easier to carry out.

It is also reasonable to assume that voluntary returns are more cost-effective in the long run, since they invest in the integration of the migrant in his/her home society. The migrant thus has fewer incentives to return compared to persons who were forcibly returned.

Policy Recommendations

Distribution of funding towards voluntary returns: There is space for further allocation of funding in the context of voluntary returns. For instance, in 2010, voluntary returns were equivalent to only 35% of the overall budget under the European Return Fund. The available data lead us to the conclusion that for every 1,000,000 set aside, a rough 1,000 migrants can be voluntarily returned. If the authorities cut down on detention places, and instead increase the budget of voluntary and assisted voluntary returns, they may achieve more cost-effective results both in terms of time-frame and the available budget. In view of the Greek crisis and the difficulty in finding employment in Greece, economic migrants may be more willing to make use of this option.

Expansion of return counseling programs: Information about return programs should be wider disseminated. Studies show that specific categories of persons (e.g. families with children) are more likely to agree to voluntarily return.

Expansion of assisted voluntary return programs: The data provided by IOM demonstrate that integration schemes are very limited and that assisted voluntary return programs prioritise nationalities from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq and Morocco. However, it would be more effective if funding were increased so as to expand the program of assisted voluntary returns and reintegration schemes to migrants who enter Greece for pure economic reasons.

Seasonal work agreements: Greek authorities may consider not only the option of bilateral agreements for readmission purposes, but also bilateral agreements of seasonal work. The idea then would be that these workers keep their residence outside the EU, but come every year for the same season. Greece has significant experience with such successful agreements with Egypt, Bulgaria and Albania. This would provide an economic incentive to countries of origin for co-operation in the field of readmission and at the same time address irregular migration at its source.

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