



Observatory for
**MIGRATION &
HUMAN RIGHTS**

SEA-EU Observatory for Migration & Human Rights

Call for contributions for an online conference

Context

The 'European University of the Seas' (SEA-EU) Alliance was officially launched in October 2019, as part of the flagship 'European University' Initiative of the European Commission, to renew the vision of universities' role as key leaders in and shapers of the future of Europe.

The SEA-EU alliance brings together six partner universities: the University of Western Brittany (France) the University of Gdansk (Poland), the University of Malta, the University of Kiel (Germany) and the University of Split (Croatia). Beyond the university communities, SEA-EU brings together six maritime cities, six human communities sharing common features in terms of cultural heritage and societal perspectives, six multidisciplinary academic institutions of comparable size, six regions open to the sea that are bearers of innovation strategies in which the maritime fact and sustainability play an essential part.

SEA-EU universities are committed to contribute and improve inclusiveness within their curricula, international opportunities and their general practices. They also acknowledge their role as education and research stakeholders in answering and tackling Europe's main challenges of the next years, among them migrations, addressing increasing human rights challenges and creating division in the EU.

The SEA-EU Observatory for Migration and Human Rights:

The reception of migrants is a European reality on which SEA-EU has the ambition to develop a determined action. The maritime and port nature of all the partner institutions of SEA-EU, integrated into trade networks, has placed them at the heart of the migration issue since time immemorial. SEA-EU therefore believes that it has a real legitimacy to address this issue among its priorities. Therefore, in line with the project proposal, the SEA-EU Observatory for Migration and Human Rights has been launched, gathering a multidisciplinary team of experts on migration. The Observatory is an autonomous, open and collaborative entity.

After 3 meetings aiming to get to know each other and start to define the Observatory area of expertise, the Observatory members propose the organization of an online





scientific event and launches a call for contribution to its members and all interested SEA-EU lecturers.

Objectives of a SEA-EU Observatory Online Science event

- Share the areas of expertise and research topics of members
- Enable connections and collaborations among members
- Precise the area of expertise of the Observatory

Format and calendar

The online science event will be held on the **25th may**. Interested members and SEA-EU lecturers/researchers are invited to propose a contribution for an oral presentation during this event (expected length: around 10 minutes)

The contribution can **address a starting or ongoing research of the members, in line with the thematics defined by the observatory (see below)**

Interested members are kindly asked to present the communication project with an abstract (1/2 – 1 page) before the **06/04**, specifying the relevant working group, at gwenaelle.goyat@univ-brest.fr (SEA-EU technical manager for UBO)

The abstract selection process for contribution proposals will be carried out by each working group on 12th april. Applicants will get the answer on the 14th april. The final programme shall be sent on the 20th may.

The exact format and organisation of the day will be set up during the next observatory meeting, according to the number of communication projects received.

Contents / Topic of interests

Observatory members have split in 3 multidisciplinary working groups, according to their expertise area.

Please find below the topics of interests of the working groups, to which the communication proposals will have to respond.

Working group 1: International EU policy impacting migration

EU migration and asylum policy has been controversial and contested from the so-called refugee crisis to the present day. The main objective of WG 1 is to reflect on instruments and proposals for international cooperation between the EU, Member States and third countries in Africa, with a special focus on the management of maritime and land external borders of the EU in the current pandemic context of the COVID-19 crisis and the New Pact on Immigration and Asylum of September 2020.



The main areas of analysis will be related, in the first place, to the so-called externalisation of border controls and EU migration management. An in-depth study is needed on the legal and political implications of this concept, not only with regard to the human rights of the people affected by such measures, but also on the EU's own values. This idea of externalisation is closely linked to cooperation with third countries through funding provided by the EU to third countries with the aim of "tackling the root causes of migration", but with the result of reducing and preventing migrants from reaching the borders of European States.

The very special and particular characteristics of maritime borders make it necessary to look specifically at cooperation for the control of these borders, and the management of migration arriving in the EU via the Mediterranean Sea. It is essential to address rescue and rescue work and cooperation with third States for this purpose.

The contribution proposals will address the following points:

- **Concept of migrant:**

To clarify the working definition of migrant from a sociological and practical point of view, the concept of migrant linked to the use of terms such as « illegal/irregular border crossing » or « irregular immigration » and engaging on broader issues of safe and legal travel.

- **Externalization of migration management**

-Legal implications of the concept of externalization, militarization of the EU external borders and the EU migration control, implication of military operations in migration management

-The use of EU funds to «tackle the root causes of migration in third countries», the cooperation with third countries in the Mediterranean Sea (military operations, training third countries border guards...)

- **Maritime borders**

Search and Rescue, Disembarkation and cooperation between EU Member State, Tackling maritime migration along the Mediterranean Sea

- **New pact on migration and asylum**

Critically analyze the new pact on migration and asylum and the implementation and possible implications of its proposals on new border procedures in EU external borders:

- **COVID-19 crisis**

-Measures adopted by Member States in dealing with migrants during the covid crisis

-Sociological analysis of different migrants moving for different reasons at different times, and using different routes (for example, migrants moving as a result of COVID and loss of employment)

-The study of the incidence of the COVID-19 and the New proposals of the pact in specific Case Studies according to the geographical location of SEA-EU partners.



Working group 2: Migrants and human rights - Changes in the protection of migrants' rights in 21st century European Union

The primary aim of Working Group 2 (WG2) is to foster the sharing of knowledge and practice concerning the protection of human rights of migrants. In this respect, particular focus will be given to the current developments within the European Union (EU), which may affect the human rights of individuals seeking to migrate to the EU by sea. Given the increasing complexities surrounding distress at sea situations in recent years, WG2 has identified as central themes for discussion: rescue operations at the maritime borders of the EU and associated issues concerning the extraterritorial application of human rights at sea. Matters concerning access to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement will be considered on an in-depth basis. WG2 will also examine contemporary developments such as the work of civil society, the responsibilities of European Agencies and the effect of COVID-19 on human rights in rescue at sea operations. The working group intends to deliver significant human rights research on the issues mentioned above from both legal and anthropological perspectives.

Topics of Interest:

- Rescue operations including rescue practices of different actors at the maritime borders of the European Union.
- Migrant access to asylum and the protection of the principle of non-refoulement.
- The role and responsibilities of various actors in rescue operations including the State, civil society, and European agencies in ensuring the protection of human rights at sea.
- Extraterritorial application of human rights at sea and co-operation with third countries, such as Libya and non-state actors, such as militia.
- The effects of COVID-19 on the protection of human rights.
- Gender equality and migrant women empowerment.
- Methodological and ethical questions of carrying out research at maritime borders, especially on search and rescue operations. Exchange of different disciplinary perspectives.

Working group 3: EU governance crisis in migration matters

The way in which migration and human rights are dealt with in the European Union has had an impact on the relationship between the European Union and Member States on the one hand, and between Member States on the other. Generally speaking, decision-making on migration in the EU today appears in crisis.

First of all, it is possible to see that this crisis of governance in migration matters is linked to the lack of EU competences in the field of migration. Decision-making procedures in this area are at stake: consensus and unanimity appear to be means of exercising power



that do not allow for the adoption of a rapid position adapted to the urgency required by the current context (an urgency accentuated by the impact of the health pandemic on migration). Analysis of the institutional and procedural difficulties encountered by the Union would contribute to identifying the alternative modes used by the Union to manage the migration crisis more effectively. Is the exploitation of soft law (e.g. The Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding) an effective means?

Secondly, the governance crisis is manifested by a solidarity principle crisis. Some member states have adhered to the illiberal doctrine and are head-on opposed to the values of the rule of law and to European decisions providing for the distribution of migrants among member states. This has led the CJEU to condemn those illiberal states that challenge the principle of European solidarity. This solidarity crisis affects the content of negotiations and the efficiency and effectiveness of decisions. The discussions on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum raise the question of how negotiations between Member States on migration are conducted when some Member States are openly hostile to a division of efforts in migration management. Comparative studies of each member state's negotiation strategies in the area of European immigration legislation could be conducted.

Without confining itself to the analysis of the current situation, this working group will propose solutions to build governance that will make it possible to achieve solidarity among Member States and, more broadly, to create mechanisms for good governance in the area of migration.

The contribution proposals will seek to answer the following questions (non-exhaustive list):

- Does the Union have sufficient competences to manage the migrant crisis accentuated by the COVID crisis?
- What is the impact of the illiberal doctrine on the European decision-making process on migration?
- How do Member States influence decision-making on migration? Real-time analysis of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum negotiations: does a Member State promote solidarity between Member States and the European Union or does it affirm its purely internal policy? Comparative analysis.