

Anna Mratschkowski [ed.]

Asylum Related Organisations in Europe

Networks and Institutional Dynamics in the
Context of a Common European Asylum System



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Preface

This book is based on the interdisciplinary teaching–research project ‘MApping REfugees’ arrivals at Mediterranean borders (MAREM)’, which was conducted from 2013 through 2016 at the Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB). The MAREM project was carried out by members of the Department of Sociology/Organisation, Migration, Participation at the Faculty for Social Science under the direction of Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries.

The research team studied various asylum-related organisations, their cooperation networks and their responses to the implementation of the Common European Asylum System. The team was divided into groups based on specific geographical areas in the Mediterranean, including Italy, Spain, Greece, Cyprus and Malta. In addition, although the original intent of the project was to focus on these five countries, we chose to include Germany because of its situation in 2015 relative to the so-called refugee crisis.

Representatives of the selected asylum-related organisations in each country were interviewed periodically, and the project consisted of three rounds of interviews (2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16). The chapters of this book present the main results of the research conducted during the most recent round and in part the results based on data collected during the two earlier rounds.

The inStudies project at RUB serves to develop teaching and supports students in building their individual profiles. By providing learning through research, it successfully concentrates on specific subjects to deepen individual students’ understanding. The inStudies project received generous funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, enabling us to combine teaching, learning and research in carrying out the MAREM project.

I am most grateful to all the research groups for their fruitful work. I also cordially thank inStudies and the University’s Faculty of Social Science, whose interdisciplinary approach, supportive atmosphere and encouragement in exchanging ideas with colleagues contributed to the success of our project. My thanks go to Professor Pries for initiating the MAREM project and helping to organise the associated seminars, excursions and international workshops. Although I was responsible for the last

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round of MAREM, I always welcomed his support and enjoyed working with all members of the project.

Many students and research assistants helped compile this book as the main product of the study. Juliana Witkowski, Rafael Bohlen, Natalia Bekassow, Katrina Böse, Jana Komorowski, Tobias Breuckmann, Lara Elliott and Megan Costello provided great help in bringing it to fruition.

I would also like to thank William White, René Reinholz and Diane Q. Forti, who provided editorial support during manuscript preparation. Special thanks go to Nomos, the publisher of the ‘Migration & Integration’ book series, for their kind offer to include our book in this series, for which I acted as editor.

During the project an interactive learning platform based on Google Earth was also created and is accessible to the broader public for free at www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/marem/en/map.shtml. It includes an informative map showing the results of our three international workshops, offers comprehensive basic information concerning the asylum-related organisations working in Europe and displays the major routes of migration to Europe. Moreover, it highlights a variety of personal stories about people who arrive in European countries seeking asylum. To Mara Hasenjürgen, as well as many other project members and assistants who made this possible, I owe my heartfelt thanks.

It is hoped that this book will help fill a gap in the research on asylum-related organisations. In the MAREM project, we applied the theoretical approach known as neo-institutionalism to our research involving selected countries and have relied on the latest data available. To reach a broader audience, we are releasing these results in English in the belief that accessibility to asylum-related research is critical in setting the groundwork for improving the refugee situation both in Europe and elsewhere.

Anna Mratschkowski
Bochum, November 2016

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Qualitative Research on the Role of Asylum-Related Organisations in the Context of the Common European Asylum System

Anna Mratschkowski

Introduction

This book reflects one of the main products of the teaching–research project “MAPPING REFUGEES’ ARRIVALS AT MEDITERRANEAN BORDERS (MAREM)” carried out by the Ruhr-University Bochum. Initiated in 2013, the MAREM project was undertaken to take a closer look at the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and its implementation in several Mediterranean countries.

Since 1999, the European Union (EU) has been working to create such a system and to improve the current legislative framework in order to establish fair and effective procedures that could be used throughout the member states, thus guaranteeing high standards of protection for people “fleeing persecution or serious harm” (EU Commission 2014: 3). The main aim of CEAS is to provide better access to asylum procedures for those who seek protection, which would lead to

fairer, quicker and better quality asylum decisions, [ensuring that] people in fear of persecution will not be returned to danger [and] providing dignified and decent conditions both for those who apply for asylum and [for] those who are granted international protection within the EU (EU Commission 2014: 1).

To achieve its aims, CEAS provides rules with regard to responsibility for asylum applications (the Dublin System), asylum procedures, qualifications of applicants for international protection and related rights and also sets common standards for the conditions of reception (EU Commission 2014: 5). Since 2005, considerable progress has been made towards greater harmonisation of these rules across Europe through joint decisions about the direction CEAS should take. In 2008 and 2009, the EU Commission submitted several legislative amendments to the Council of the European Parliament concerning improvements to CEAS.

In June 2013, the second stage of this system (CEAS II) was adopted in order to strengthen such harmonisation (EU Commission 2014). The aim of CEAS II was to implement fair and more efficient procedures for asylum seekers in Europe by raising the processing standards and strengthening solidarity among the member states receiving them (Bendel 2014: 2). The legal framework of CEAS II consists of two regulations and five directives. Two EU agencies play a particularly important role in the implementation of CEAS – the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the border agency Frontex (EU Commission 2014).

Although major changes in legislation at the national level were driven by the implementation of CEAS and its directives and regulations, EU member states have adopted unilateral measures to deal with the inflow of asylum seekers into their territory (EU Parliament 2015) instead of consistently applying the CEAS provisions. The CEAS directives and regulations are intended to ensure that all those who apply for asylum in Europe undergo a fair and consistent asylum procedure regardless of the member state to which they apply:

The revised Asylum Procedures Directive aims at fairer, quicker and better-quality asylum decisions. Asylum seekers with special needs will receive the necessary support to explain their claim, and in particular there will be greater protection of unaccompanied minors and victims of torture.

The revised Reception Conditions Directive ensures that there are humane material reception conditions (such as housing) for asylum seekers across the EU and that their fundamental rights are fully respected. It also ensures that detention is applied only as a measure of last resort.

The revised Qualification Directive clarifies the grounds for granting international protection and therefore will make asylum decisions more robust. It will also improve access to rights and integration measures for beneficiaries of international protection.

The revised Dublin Regulation enhances the protection of asylum seekers during the process of establishing the state responsible for examining the application and clarifies the rules governing the relations between states. It creates a system to identify problems in national asylum or reception systems early on and to address their root causes before they develop into fully fledged crises.

The revised EURODAC Regulation will allow law enforcement access to the EU database of the fingerprints of asylum seekers under strictly limited circumstances in order to prevent, detect or investigate the most serious crimes, such as murder and terrorism (EU Commission 2015).

Even though CEAS defines common standards and procedures, there are major differences in the living conditions and recognition rates of people seeking protection among the European countries (EASO 2015: 27). There

is an obvious gap between official declarations ('talk') and actual behaviour ('action') within the EU, between national governments and NGOs. Applying the theory of neo-institutionalism, the MAREM project examines the role of asylum-related organisations and their cooperation networks with respect to CEAS and the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe. The MAREM project seeks a solid scientific understanding of current European migration policy, of the situation of asylum seekers and refugees and of the scientific, governmental and non-governmental organisations and their networks that are involved in this area. Moreover, available and examined information concerning this timely and up-to-date issue will be made accessible to the broader public. The project aims to draw public and scientific attention to the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe and to share knowledge as a means of supporting the improvement of this situation and asylum politics.

Current State of Research

The current asylum situation in Europe has been the subject of considerable debate within the scientific community. Although much research has been done in the field of asylum-related issues (e.g. Mainwaring 2008; Lambert et al. 2013; Cabot 2014; Pastore and Roman 2014; Tirandafyllidou 2014; Vellutti 2014; Kalpouzos and Mann 2015; Karakayali and Kleist 2015; Katsiaficas 2015; CEAR 2016; Mogiani 2016), refugee-related organisations and their cooperation networks have been overlooked. The MAREM project is an attempt to fill this gap in the research, and reports of some of the earlier studies (carried out prior to 2016) are already available (Gansbergen 2014; Gansbergen and Breuckmann 2016; Gansbergen and Pries 2015; Gansbergen¹ et al. 2016). These studies involved one or two (at most five) Mediterranean countries and had a less theoretical background than do those described in this book. For example, Pries (2016) described the refugee movement that occurred in 2015 in Europe with a focus on Germany.

In this book, the authors describe the main outcomes of their research in six European countries (Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Italy, Spain and Germany)

1 Gansbergen (now Mratschkowski) is my former name.

as part of the MAREM project in which the theory of neo-institutionalism provides the scientific basis of the investigations. Their analyses contribute to our understanding of the asylum-related organisations currently at work in Europe.

Neo-institutionalism

Because the MAREM project focuses specifically on the cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations, the theory of neo-institutionalism was chosen as the scientific basis of this research. Sociological neo-institutionalism (see Meyer and Rowan 1977) approaches institutions from a sociological perspective, defining them as a collection of more or less formalised rules and traditions (Schimank 2007: 162). As a theory, neo-institutionalism is concerned with the emergence of new institutions, interactions among institutions and their effect on their environment. Attention is also given to the organisations operating within these institutions and the expectations and influences of their environment with regard to the organisations' appearance and behaviour. This theory can also be used to explain the requirements for the successful implementation of a homogeneous asylum system across Europe.

This new orientation proposed that formal organizational structure reflected not only technical demands and resource dependencies, but was also shaped by institutional forces, including rational myths, knowledge legitimated through the educational system and by the professions, public opinion, and the law. The core idea that organizations are deeply embedded in social and political environments suggested that organizational practices and structures are often either reflections of or responses to rules, beliefs, and conventions built into the wider environment (Powell 2007: 975).

Neo-institutionalism is concerned with the adaptation of organisations to their organisational field. Organisations within the same field can influence one another in certain ways, and taking a closer look at an organisation's network will reveal its environment. Therefore, analysing the cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations can help us learn more about the role of these organisations within specific environments, and vice versa, including the role of these environments in forming the structure and operating principles of the organisations.

We focused on the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) to explain certain actions organisations take, interactions between organisations and

changes and structuring within institutional fields. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 147–160), the main goal of an organisation is its survival and legitimation, both of which are achievable with the help of appropriate structures and action. Organisations tend to observe their organisational environment in order to endure on local, national and even international levels and to legitimise their work. Often the organisational field becomes institutionalised, allowing what has become known as the ‘myth of rationalisation’ to emerge. This concept refers to certain rationalised structural elements binding organisations that want to become or remain a part of the institutionalised field (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 343). In trying to achieve rational, effective and efficient action, organisations might even adapt certain structures and copy practices. In the long run, this can lead to a homogenisation of the organisational field, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148), who define the organisational field as

those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services and products (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 148).

Institutions can influence organisations in three ways that are central to the theory of neo-institutionalism: regulative requirements and compulsion, normative exceptions, and cultural–cognitive structures of meaning that are not questioned within the societal system (Sandhu 2012: 76). This can lead to a homogenisation of the institutional field – a process known as isomorphism. This process occurs in organisations within an institutional field that know and observe one another. Such observation leads to mutual learning and to an institutional alignment through the previously mentioned pressure of legitimisation (Sandhu 2012: 77). DiMaggio and Powell differentiate three types of isomorphism:

- *Normative isomorphism* occurs in response to the pressure of meeting normative expectations owing to professionalisation in the organisational field. It is possible to analyse the extent to which the organisations’ internal structures and working procedures converge as a reaction to an increasing degree of professionalisation.
- *Coercive isomorphism* is a result of the influence of political institutional frameworks and the problem of an organisation’s legitimation. Coercive isomorphism indicates the adaptation of an organisation to the paradigms of action of another organisation on which it depends

for funding. It results from the formal pressures exerted by one organisation on another organisation.

- *Mimetic isomorphism* is the phenomenon that occurs when organisations orientate themselves towards well-established organisations because of uncertainties.

These three types of isomorphism display an ideal typical distinction. Because of general social and organisational complexity, their characteristics influence one another and are often indistinguishable (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150).

One reason for isomorphic change is professionalisation based on the “*resting of formal education and of legitimation in a cognitive base produced by university specialists*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 152). Organisations professionalise by choosing staff members with a certain educational background, thereby becoming more similar to one another because organisational norms and behaviour are developed among professionals in universities and professional training institutions (Ibid.). According to *normative isomorphism*,

the greater the reliance on academic credentials in choosing managerial and staff personnel, the greater the extent to which an organization will become like other organizations in its field (Ibid.: 155).

Hence, having the same criteria and standards when it comes to choosing staff would be regarded as an increase in homogeneity in this field and would eventually lead to decreased diversity in their ways of working. However, research shows that often just the formal structure of an organisation is influenced by cooperation and pressure of legitimisation, whereas the informal and actual strategies of action differ from these institutional paradigms. This leads to the emergence of what can be called a ‘talk-and-action gap’ in the everyday institutional structures, whereas actors formally follow the institutional paradigms but rely on the former structures of their own organisations (Sandhu 2012: 74). Institutions influence the formal structure (‘talk’) but leave actual strategies (‘action’) untouched, because organisations prefer to rely on their informal structures. This phenomenon can be seen in relation to the normative power of institutions. Organisations often depend on these institutions to survive, so to receive maximum support, it is necessary for them to be legitimised. Consequently, they must follow certain discourses of institutions in a formal way yet this reveals little about their informal organisational structure (Sandhu 2012: 76).

Another reason for isomorphic change is to improve the organisations' economic situation. According to *coercive isomorphism* (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150), the more an organisation depends on a single source of funding, the greater the extent of isomorphic change and the more this organisation would adapt to an organisation on which it depends for resources:

The greater the centralization of organization A's resource supply, the greater the extent to which organization A will change isomorphically to resemble the organizations on which it depends for resources (Ibid.).

Compliance with coercive pressure means the conscious willingness to incorporate values, norms or institutional requirements in order to receive benefits, which can include increased resources or legitimacy (Oliver 1990: 246–247). The mechanisms of coercive isomorphism are also likely to be caused by political influences and dependencies: “*In some circumstances, organizational change is a direct response to government mandate*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150). Many non-profit organisations depend on government support and therefore operate within a politically controlled environment. The pressures exerted by government agencies increase the likelihood that organisations will surrender to these coercive pressures in order to receive needed resources (Johnston 2013: 34).

Some organisations try to increase their legitimacy and efficiency by mimicking other organisations within their environment. When *mimetic isomorphism* processes are at work, “*organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 151). By analysing the extent to which an organisation copies the best practices of other organisations in its environment, one can determine whether its internal structures and behaviour converge. It also is interesting to see whether organisations copy practices from similar organisations, because this would lead to homogenisation among the organisations in that field. DiMaggio and Powell indicate that greater homogeneity does not necessarily lead to more efficiency:

It is important to note that each of the institutional isomorphic processes can be expected to proceed in the absence of evidence that they increase internal organizational efficiency (Ibid.: 153).

An expectation of homogeneity could become stronger when the number of alternative organisational models is low: “*The fewer the number of visi-*

ble alternative organizational models in a field, the faster the rate of isomorphism in that field” (Ibid.: 155).

The MAREM project focuses on these processes of isomorphism, the identification of network dynamics and the gaps between talk and action. In the studies described in this book, asylum-related organisations in Europe are the specific focus of our research.

Methodological Process of Teaching Through Research

In the MAREM project, qualitative semi-structured expert interviews were conducted in the six countries of interest. Data were collected over a period of three years by means of more than 100 interviews with asylum-related governmental organisations (GOs), international governmental organisations (IGOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the field of asylum. In March 2016, the project members conducted expert interviews with representatives from relevant NGOs, research institutions, IGOs and GOs in the Mediterranean region and in the city of Bochum in Germany.

In order to obtain specific information within a limited period of time, an efficient methodology was chosen (see Bogner et al. 2014: 18). The main method used in the MAREM research project was to conduct expert interviews with the aid of a semi-structured questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire was adapted to the thematic focus of the research, but it also allowed both the interviewers and the interviewees to set priorities and choose their own focus (see Pfaffenbach 2007: 159). On the basis of the research questions, a set of questions was developed that serves as a framework for the interview. Although the course of the questionnaire was structured by the issues under study, it could be adjusted depending on how the interview situation evolved (see Mayer 2013: 43).

Experts who work within asylum-related organisations have well-honed, privileged insights into specific knowledge about the dynamics and networks of the organisations. They are willing to cooperate and share their expertise and practical knowledge for purposes of research. Following their practical experience, the information obtained can provide orientation and opportunities for action for other related actors (Bogner et al. 2014: 14). With regard to their specialised function within the organisation, these interviewees could also contribute technical knowledge about operations and the refugees’ situation in the field, the laws of the specific

countries, the legal environment and changes in cooperation behaviour. The experts also were familiar with the decision-making processes in their organisations. Although they were supposed to give the researchers an objective point of view, they often did not take a neutral stance because of subjective interpretations, their own opinions and beliefs and the fact that they were expected to promote the ideas and interests of the organisations they worked for. For this reason, the interviewers had to be aware of the interviewees' living reality. In addition, there was no claim of statistical reliability owing to the qualitative nature of the research. Rather, the goal was to identify different perspectives on the same topic and produce the greatest possible range of information and ways of interpretation through diverse sampling (see Sandelowski 1995: 180).

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain information about nature of the organisational networks and the applicability of neo-institutionalism and isomorphism to these networks. It included questions regarding changes in the cooperation networks and the isomorphic processes that have occurred in the past few years. To confirm the findings and identify elements of development, some organisations were interviewed more than once during the three rounds of interviews (2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16).

Because the aim of the MAREM project is to analyse organisational networks, organisations were regarded as actors. The questionnaire for the expert interviews elicited the organisations' most important cooperation partners in order to carry out network analyses. There are two different perspectives of the network analysis: egocentric networks and entire networks. In an egocentric network, there is a focal actor and a set of contacts of this actor from his or her perspective (Jansen 2006: 65). The whole network reflects all the actors within a defined set and the ties among them (Erlhofer 2010: 252). We decided to analyse the egocentric networks of the interviewed organisations, which would reflect the environment of the organisations from their own perspective.

Three visualisations of the networks for each city or country were created using the network tool Visone² to analyse the networks more closely. In each illustration, the cooperation ties for the investigated organisations

2 Visone is an open-source software designed for visualising networks. For more information, see <http://www.visone.info>.

were visualised with regard to three criteria: actor type, spatial reach, and driving norms and values.

These three characteristics were used to explore isomorphic processes and the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the networks composed of asylum- and refugee-related organisations in the countries studied. The ego-centric networks of the organisations in one country were connected to each other in the case of common ties in order to be able to reveal a bigger picture of the work, the cooperation partners and the role of asylum-related organisations in Europe.

This book presents the results of the MAREM research project. Coverage begins with an analysis of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and its role in the asylum system in Europe. The subsequent chapters describe the research on asylum-related organisations in six selected EU countries – that is, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Italy, Spain and Germany. The final chapter offers further analysis and comparisons of the authors' results.

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The Role of EASO in the European Asylum System

Lana Horsthemke, Friederike Vogt

1. Introduction

In 2011, the European Commission and the European Parliament created the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) as a support structure for the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). CEAS was designed to ensure the protection of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe. The main task of EASO is to help EU member states fulfil their obligations by facilitating and coordinating their cooperation in keeping with CEAS standards and regulatory mechanisms. With this in mind, we analysed the supportive role of EASO to evaluate its influence on the organisations working in the area of asylum seekers and refugees.

1.1 Structure of EASO

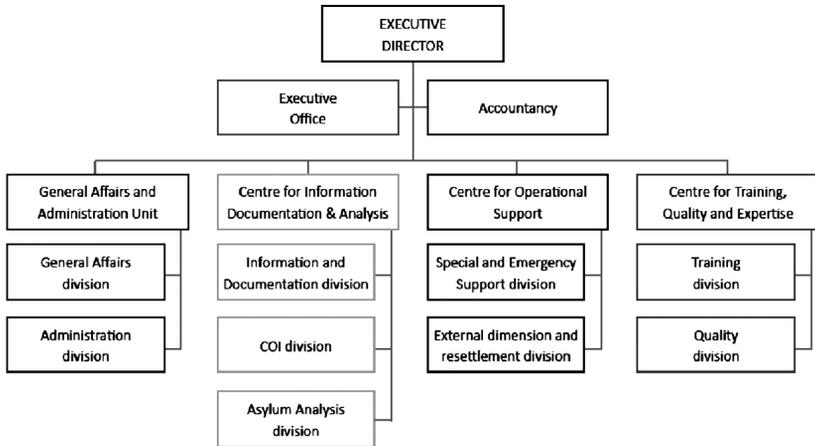
According to Regulation (EU) 439/2010,¹ EASO was established as an independent European body to support EU member states in meeting their obligations with regard to asylum seekers and refugees within the framework of CEAS (EASO 2014).² The agency is currently under the guidance of the Executive Director Jose Carreira, who is the legal representative of EASO and is responsible for the implementation and day-to-day management of the programme. The Executive Director is elected by the Management Board, which consists of representatives of the EU member states and associate countries, the European Commission and a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which together constitute the agency's planning and monitoring organ (EASO 2014 b). As shown in Figure 1, the internal structure of EASO consists of four main units – General Affairs and Administration; the Centre for In-

1 More information about this regulation can be found online at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Aj10022>.

2 For more information, see <https://www.easo.europa.eu/about-us>.

formation, Documentation and Analysis; the Centre for Operational Support; and the Centre for Training, Quality and Expertise – each of which has a well-defined focus. The head of each unit supports and consults with the Executive Director, the Accounting Officer and the Executive Office (EASO 2014: 7).

Figure 1: Structural organisation of EASO



Source: EASO 2014: 7.

1.2 Mandate

The mandate of EASO includes three goals:

- to strengthen and intensify cooperation among EU member states on asylum matters in order to encourage the exchange of information, ideas and expertise;
- to assist EU member states that are particularly affected by the influx of asylum seekers and refugees; and
- to advance the practical implementation of CEAS by supporting member states in fulfilling European obligations with regard to asylum matters, by bundling proven practices in the form of guidelines and by

publishing an annual report on the asylum situation in Europe and co-operation with third countries.³

To ensure that its mandate will be fully realised, EASO offers various types of support to member states, making adjustments depending on their specific needs and the state of their asylum systems. Long-term assistance is offered in two ways: (1) through permanent support in the form of training sessions – either face to face by providing training material or via e-learning platforms – to ensure adherence to uniform standards in the asylum process (EASO 2014: 2); and (2) through information and analysis, with the aim of sharing the results and assessments at the EU level and providing information by means of regular reports (e.g. the annual report) (ibid. :2). If necessary, EASO will offer assistance tailored to member states' specific needs and individualised tools for quality control (ibid. :2). For member states particularly affected by high inflows of asylum seekers and refugees, EASO will coordinate emergency aid in crisis situations, providing operational assistance by creating an operational plan and deploying expert teams from other member states to bolster the affected countries' asylum systems. EASO will tender third-country support to countries that are not EU members, with the additional aim of strengthening the external dimension of CEAS in terms of capacity building, information exchange (e.g. regarding the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers from third countries) and establishing partnerships to reach common solutions (ibid. :2).

1.3 The Theoretical Framework of Neo-institutionalism

To embed the research in a theoretical framework, the tradition of neo-institutionalism was chosen as the context in which to analyse the collected data. Neo-institutionalism refers to the process by which organisations adapt to their organisational field (For a detailed explanation of the approach see the first chapter of this book). Such adaptation can be reflected in the development of cooperation networks associated with an organisation and how these entities influence one another. In this study, we will examine whether EASO as an organisation is adapting to other organisations in its environment and, conversely, will attempt to illuminate the in-

3 See access to legal content in Eur-lexj1022 2014.

fluence of EASO as an important agency on organisations in its own environment.

For our analysis of the status of EASO's cooperation network and its influence on its cooperation partners (more specifically, on the cooperation partners' networks), we chose a research approach in line with the hypothesis introduced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) in their paper on institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in the organisational field (For additional information on this subject, see the first chapter of this book). According to these authors, "*The greater the extent to which the organizations in a field transact with agencies of the state [i.e. show more homogeneity], the greater the extent of isomorphism in the field [of organisations] as a whole*" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 155). In this case, EASO affects the member states and asylum-related actors on a supranational level, but it does not act directly as a state agency. However, DiMaggio and Powell's thesis is still useful for our approach, because it relates the isomorphic processes to a legal and political top-down influence and a dependency that results from an authority implementing a certain standard for a field (ibid.). This relationship remains the same with EASO as a European institution that supports the member states with their processes of implementing the CEAS, which inherits common standards for the asylum system. Therefore, one might expect that the field of asylum-related organisations will be increasingly dominated by political actors and organisations, and that NGOs, for example, will cooperate to a greater extent with state actors as the asylum system becomes more and more institutionalised and lifted to the European level, which might also lead to more cooperation on the European level. Applying DiMaggio and Powell's thesis to our research, we developed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: As the political agency supporting the member states in implementing CEAS, EASO causes isomorphic change for the networks of asylum-related actors in Europe; that is, they tend to cooperate with actors of a certain type.

Hypothesis 2: The actors cooperating more closely with EASO show a greater tendency towards isomorphism and therefore towards more homogeneous networks than do actors with loose cooperation.

To test Hypothesis 2, it is necessary to differentiate between the types of cooperation that organisations have with EASO. Because this differentiation could not be made without the results of the interviews we conducted in 2016, thus connecting the theoretical basis of the analysis with our findings, we will present and examine our results later, in Section 2.2.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 150–152) identify three mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change that may lead to increased homogeneity, two of which we used in analysing the data collected. Concerning EASO, these mechanisms need to be examined on different levels. The aim was to see how far EASO can and does model itself after similar organisations in their field by either adopting or not adopting the best practices of these other organisations. Based on these considerations, we developed two more hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3: By copying best practices of other organisations, EASO is mimicking organisations in its environment in order to increase its efficiency and legitimacy.

Hypothesis 4: Being a European agency, EASO is relying on academic credentials in choosing staff members, in keeping with normative isomorphism processes.

In connection with the other chapters in this book, this approach was broadened by the addition of two more general hypotheses, hypotheses (5) and (6). The EU member countries being studied as part of the MAREM project include Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Germany and Malta. Members of the groups studying each of these states (i.e. the authors of the remaining chapters in this book) have focused on the supposed influence of CEAS on the work of asylum- and refugee-related organisations in developing the profound legislative framework of national asylum systems. EASO must be regarded as an organisation that acts on behalf of CEAS by encouraging its implementation and establishing it as the first point of contact for member states when they encounter difficulties with its implementation into national law. Our research emphasises the role of EASO as an accelerator for the implementation of CEAS and attempts to assess the influence both of CEAS and of EASO as its support agency on the work of asylum- and refugee-related organisations in Europe. On this basis, two more hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis 5: EASO contributes to the common ways of working among the member states in the asylum system by collecting and sharing best practices.

Hypothesis 6: The establishment of EASO has promoted the implementation of CEAS.

1.4 Data

Diverging from the approach taken in the other chapters of this book, our study addresses the influence of a single organisation on the asylum system and the actors within it, rather than with the dynamics and developments of the field as a whole. Still, all the project members have used the same methods for data collection and analysis (For further information, see the first chapter of this book). All six of the other groups used the same questionnaire when conducting the interviews in Malta, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Greece and Germany, so the results for the individual countries could be more readily compared. For our examination of EASO, however, a slightly different questionnaire was designed. Questions were added to learn more about this agency's precise role and its influence on the asylum-related organisations and on this field in general.

One of the research aims was to determine whether EASO as a political actor influences the asylum-related organisations and their networks within their environment (Hypotheses [1] and [2]). The egocentric network (for the definition of this term, see the first chapter of this book) of EASO was connected to the egocentric networks of its cooperation partners and will be analysed in Section 2.2. Only those organisations with egocentric networks based on data from the MAREM project rounds 2014–2016 will be evaluated and linked to the hypotheses.

During the field research, interviews were conducted at the EASO office in Valletta, Malta, on 9 March 2016. The interviewees were Jadwiga Maczynska, who was working as the Information Analysis Coordinator at the Centre for Information, Documentation and Analysis, and Killian O'Brien, who was employed as Training Officer at the Centre for Training, Quality and Expertise and was responsible for the professional development of members of courts and tribunals (see EASO 2016). For the purposes of the MAREM project, EASO was interviewed only once.

2. Results

2.1 Cooperation

EASO engages (at least) in three distinctive types of cooperation. One is the cooperation with EU member states; another is the one with EU+

countries and thirdly it cooperates with the civil society within Europe in the form of the annual Consultative Forum.

The structure of EASO's cooperation on the level of the EU member states has changed since the agency was created and continues to develop. Maczynska describes the nature of this cooperation during the first years of EASO's existence as an

exchange of experience and discussing together and kind of sharing practices. And now it has increasingly become about working together to produce something together, like a common report, like common training material or common guidance. So it is becoming practical in terms of output, in terms of [the] tools we create (EASO 2016).

Such cooperation is becoming more regular and more operational:

At the member state level or the country level individually, I guess the role of EASO is increasingly practical and becoming more and more operational, as we call it. We can't just go and tell member states what they should be doing. We work hand in hand with them, also by deploying member state experts from the different countries. On that level, cooperation is very practical, kind of like on a daily basis, with regard to actually doing the work asylum officers are doing, processing cases and training the officials and doing all [the] other activities (EASO 2016).

The above statement also reflects the mutual development of cooperation between EASO and the member states in an application-orientated form. This change represents a response to the discussions, exchange of experiences and sharing of practices (EASO 2016).

These developments indicate a major shift in the cooperative behaviour of the actors involved in CEAS. Concerning EASO and its role in assisting the EU member states that are under particular pressure, EASO is developing a specific operational plan that defines the area, the site of the mission and the modus operandi, goals and duration of the mission and deploys asylum support teams that are given specific tasks.⁴ With regard to the specific form of cooperation and practical assistance on the part of EASO, Killian O'Brien sees an increased acceptance of the office's legitimacy and its work. Member states that are facing problems are now approaching EASO as a first step towards solutions. O'Brien also highlights the fundamental role of the member states in the asylum system:

4 Access to legal content: Eur-Lex j1022.

The member states are still the people in charge of the process and driving it forward. But in the 18 months that I have been working here, it would probably be fair to say that there has been an increased recognition of EASO's role, and EASO is almost becoming a first stop for many queries that member states have. A member state recognises a problem [or] an issue and often one of their first steps is to get in touch with us and see whether we already have relevant information or whether we can suggest a solution (EASO 2016).

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, cooperation also takes place on a third-country level and includes partnerships, working agreements and information exchange, all of which ensure common solutions and the protection of people in need (EASO 2014; Access to legal content: Eur-Lex jI022 2014: 1). Maczynska indicates the persistence of common politics with this approach:

There is the European Union or EU+ kind of approach because we also have cooperation and working agreements with countries outside of the EU. There is cooperation at this level. The aim is to make sure that CEAS is indeed common in the way that there are uniform consistent policies. So, basically, if a person is coming to the EU+ with a protection claim, we can ensure that the claim will be processed with a common understanding of how we define a need of protection (EASO 2016).

Thus, EASO regards itself more as an institutional framework for cooperation among the EU member states rather than between the European member states and the EU+ countries, where cooperation also takes place and is enhanced:

It is also very much about having member states or EU+ countries work together and us joining the group. [...] It should be [as if] the countries are talking to each other while EASO is also there. It is more like triggering or providing a forum for the cooperation rather than having one-on-one exchanges, which was maybe the practice in the past (EASO 2016).

Cooperation with civil society takes the form of an annual Consultative Forum (CF), which provides a platform for the exchange of information and expertise between the civil society and EASO (EASO Consultative Forum).⁵ The CF was established in 2011 soon after EASO came into being, and it is open to dialogue with various actors from civil society who are involved in the asylum- and refugee-related field “on the widest possible basis” (ibid.), which includes NGOs, universities and legal authorities

5 For further information, see <https://www.easo.europa.eu/civil-society/easo-consultative-forum>.

(EASO 2014: 7). Maczynska explains the broad approach of cooperation with civil society by the fact that every actor in the asylum-related field can contribute specific information because of their specialised work experience and therefore their different levels of expertise and points of view:

Yes, we believe that civil society is very important, because it is important to have different perspectives (and they definitely bring you different perspectives), and that is why we are interested in working with them specifically. Also, when it comes to expert input, it is not just kind of bouncing ideas around, learning from people who come with a different kind of agenda, with a different kind of background. It is also about their specific expertise based on their practical work with refugees or asylum seekers (EASO 2016).

In another statement, Maczynska reiterates that cooperation with (broad) representatives from civil society makes an important contribution to EASO's work, and she also highlights the shift towards a more practical level that continues to develop:

So, we try to increasingly cooperate with basically everybody who has something relevant to say about the CEAS. And again, coming back to the regulation: you can see that 'practical cooperation' is absolutely a keyword that will come up in different contexts (EASO 2016).

NGOs in particular are ascribed a fundamental role in the cooperation between civil society and EASO:

Actually, I would be very concerned if NGOs stopped criticising us, because that would mean that something is really not working out very well [...]. They come with a certain agenda, and I mean that in a positive way. They come with a strong mandate, with a strong belief, norm or value system, and they criticise us. If they do it from that perspective, it is healthy and is part of how the system should work [in] that we have different roles (EASO 2016).

Again, EASO is emphasising its role as an institutional basis for cooperation – in this case, to avoid overlapping and to focus on the actual state of the research:

We try not to overlap and not to do something that has already been explored or researched. When there is input from other stakeholders, members of civil society or anybody else, we try to include it in our products rather than re-inventing the wheel and doing the work again. So again, it is more about creating a forum for cooperation (EASO 2016).

A strong relation was also observed between EASO and the UNHCR, because this collaboration is included in the EU Directive in which the establishment of EASO is decided (Regulation [EU] No 439/2010: 2). Within

this regulation, the commitment of the UNHCR on the management board of EASO is also regulated (Regulation (EU) No 439/2010: 2).⁶

2.2 Network Analysis

Based on the data collected in our study, we examined Hypotheses (1) and (2) and created visualisations that display the types of organisations involved, their spatial reach, their norms, values and cooperation partners. The following is an overview of the results of our analysis.

For Hypothesis (1) to be verified, a high degree of homogeneity should be evident in the networks of all organisations that cooperate with EASO. In addition, the majority of cooperation partners should be political actors. In this case, further analysis of the type of cooperation is not important, because our aim is to test only whether or not the state of the network assumed in the hypothesis is given.

In order to test Hypothesis (2), further differentiation is required. Based on information derived from the MAREM project interviews conducted in 2016, the organisations were divided into two types according to the extent of their cooperation with EASO (see Table 1). This distinction was made by analysing the organisations' websites and documents, and only those organisations for which the type of cooperation could be defined and empirically proven were included in the analysis.

6 "Given its expertise in the field of asylum, UNHCR should be represented by a non-voting member of the Management Board so that it is fully involved in the work of the Support Office" (Regulation [EU] No 439/2010: 2).

Table 1: Asylum-related organisations in Italy, Spain, Malta and Greece and the type and extent of their cooperation with EASO

ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	TYPE OF COOPERATION	
UNHCR	Italy	Working Arrangement	} STRONG TIE / Greater extent of cooperation
MFHS	Malta	Staff members trained by EASO	
Cruz Roja Madrid	Spain	Staff working for EASO	
IOM	Italy	Consultative Forum, Cooperation in relocation	} WEAK TIE / Lower extent of cooperation
CEAR	Spain	Consulted by EASO once or twice per year	
PRAKSIS	Greece	Cooperation in relocation, no partnership	
Aditus	Malta	Monitoring EASO (EASO Monitoring Blog)	
JRS	Malta	Unknown	
CIR	Italy	Unknown	

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–2016. JRS = Jesuit Refugee Service; CIR = Compagnie Industriali Riunite.

Table 1 shows that the actors were divided into organisations with ties to EASO that were either ‘strong’ or ‘weak’. As a rule, in social network analysis, this relation refers to interpersonal ties, but in this case it will be used to describe inter-organisational ties. The following definition by Granovetter was borrowed to present a classification that could be used to rank the organisations: “*the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie*” (Granovetter 1973: 1361). Because this book is concerned with ties among organisations,⁷ the factor ‘emotional intensity’ was not used in classifying the types of ties.

7 In his definition, Granovetter focuses on interpersonal ties, which is why the criteria for his characterisations of strong and weak have been adjusted for the purpose of this analysis. In addition, his focus on the particular strength of weak ties is not important here, because our analysis is based on the paper by DiMaggio and Powell; the definition by Granovetter is simply being borrowed.

As shown in Table 1, four organisations were classified as cooperation partners with ‘strong’ ties. In this case, ‘strong’ ties means being in contact often and on a regular basis, sometimes even regulated by a contract. According to this definition, the first organisation that was classified as having a ‘strong’ tie to EASO was the UNHCR. The working arrangements between these two organisations have existed since 2013 and have even been laid down in the EASO Regulation.⁸ It is important to note that out of the four MAREM countries displayed in the table, EASO mentioned only the UNHCR Italy as a cooperation partner. Not all national offices of the UNHCR cooperate with EASO, and cooperation depends on the situation and necessity of cooperation in each country. Next, the Ministry for Home Affairs and Social Security (MHAS) of Malta can be considered to have strong ties to EASO, its staff members having been trained by the institution in line with the establishment of CEAS: “*We do work with EASO. [...] But we still cooperate with them on a good basis, especially as regards participation in training initiatives, which are of course positive*” (MHAS 2016). The third organisation to be classified as a cooperation partner with a strong tie to EASO is Cruz Roja Madrid, which has staff members rotating once a month to work for EASO continuously: “*We have a system, and every month we change the person who is working there; we go there and support them, sharing best practices*” (Cruz Roja Madrid 2016). In addition, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Italy participates in several EASO activities: “*IOM is a member of EASO’s Consultative Forum. IOM has recently cooperated with EASO in its support to Greece and has participated in EASO expert meetings on relocation and resettlement*” (EASO 2014). Cooperation with IOM has been intensified over the past two years, especially when it comes to relocation – a field in which IOM has a high level of expertise.

Three other organisations may be considered cooperation partners with ‘weak’ ties to EASO. Here, ‘weak’ refers to irregular, loose contact that does not occur much more often than once or twice a year. In this case, a cooperation partner with a weak tie to EASO is to be understood as a technical term, as described above; for our purposes, the descriptor ‘partner’ should not be overstated. The first organisation so categorised is the

8 “*The Support Office should also act in close cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, where appropriate, with relevant international organisations in order to benefit from their expertise and support*” (Regulation (EU) No 439/2010: 2).

Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) in Spain, which is occasionally consulted by EASO; however, the two groups do not cooperate on a regular basis: “*CEAR is working with EASO; there are no projects together, but they consult CEAR once or twice a year, they draft a report and CEAR [appears] in the acknowledgement*” (CEAR 2016). Second, the Greek NGO Programs of Development, Social Support and Medical Cooperation (PRAKSIS) states that it cooperates with EASO in relocation, but it clearly stressed that this cooperation cannot be called a ‘partnership’, which is why they were classified as a cooperation partner with a weak tie to EASO:

[The relation to] EASO is not a partnership. We work with them because we get referrals from EASO for people who joined the relocation programme because we have a programme that accommodates relocation applicants and we provide supporting services. So we are not involved in any of the registration processes; it’s just to cover the basic needs of people who join, apply for asylum, apply for relocation (PRAKSIS 2016).

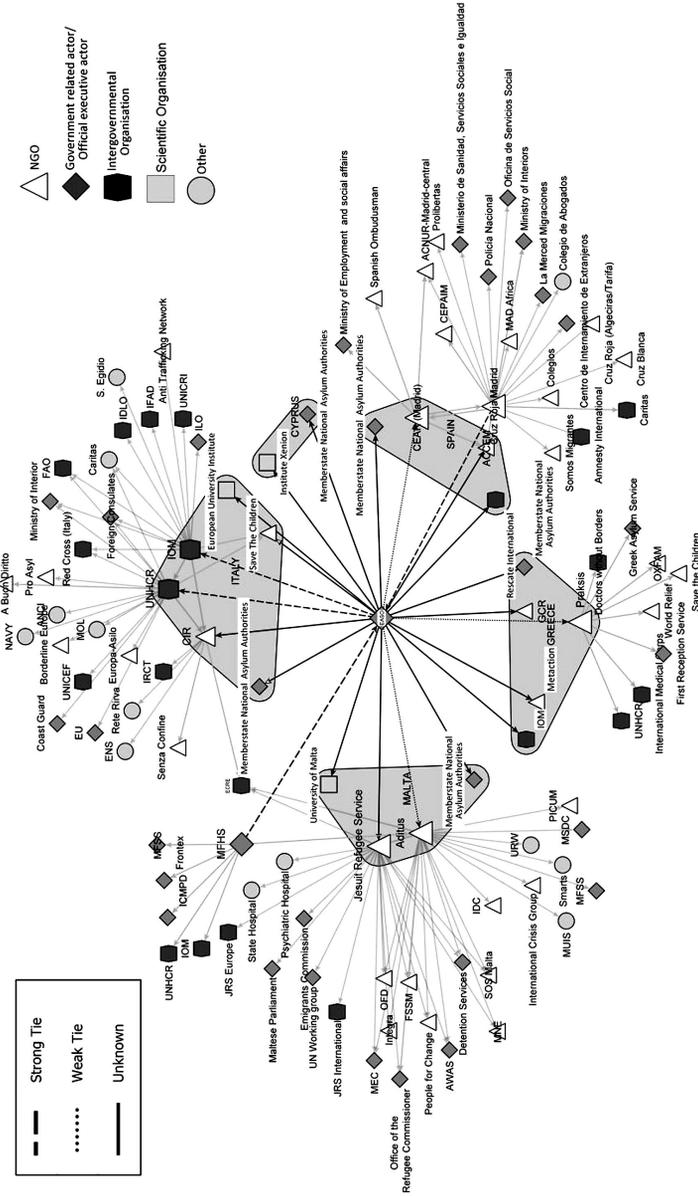
Finally, the Maltese NGO Aditus states that it has occasionally participated in the CF and used to run the EASO Monitor,⁹ a blog for making the work of EASO more transparent:

[...] when EASO was set up, it was very closed. There was not so much information on what EASO was, what it was doing, what they were discussing. So the idea was more to monitor the actual organisation. Trying to make it more transparent, trying to know what their discussions were about (Aditus 2016).

Because this organisation mainly monitored the EASO office from the outside but denied regular cooperation with EASO during the MAREM interview, Aditus was considered to have a weak tie to EASO, especially because they indicated that the work of EASO had not led to many changes in the Maltese asylum system and does not have much influence on the work of Aditus: “*Not so much, I would say. I mean, we monitor what they do, but otherwise not so much*” (Aditus 2016).

9 For more information, see <http://easomonitor.blogspot.de>.

Figure 2: Types of organisations



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–16.

For the last two organisations listed in Table 1, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and Compagnie Industriali Riunite (CIR), we found no accessible information about what kind of contact they have with EASO. Still, their egocentric networks are known. Because they could not be classified as either cooperation partners with a weak or a strong tie to EASO – a premise for the proper assessment of Hypothesis (2) – they have been included only in the analysis concerning Hypothesis (1).

We will now analyse the networks in detail to determine whether our hypotheses can be verified. Each network visualisation will be analysed separately for each hypothesis, which is followed by an interpretation of our findings and conclusions concerning the hypotheses.

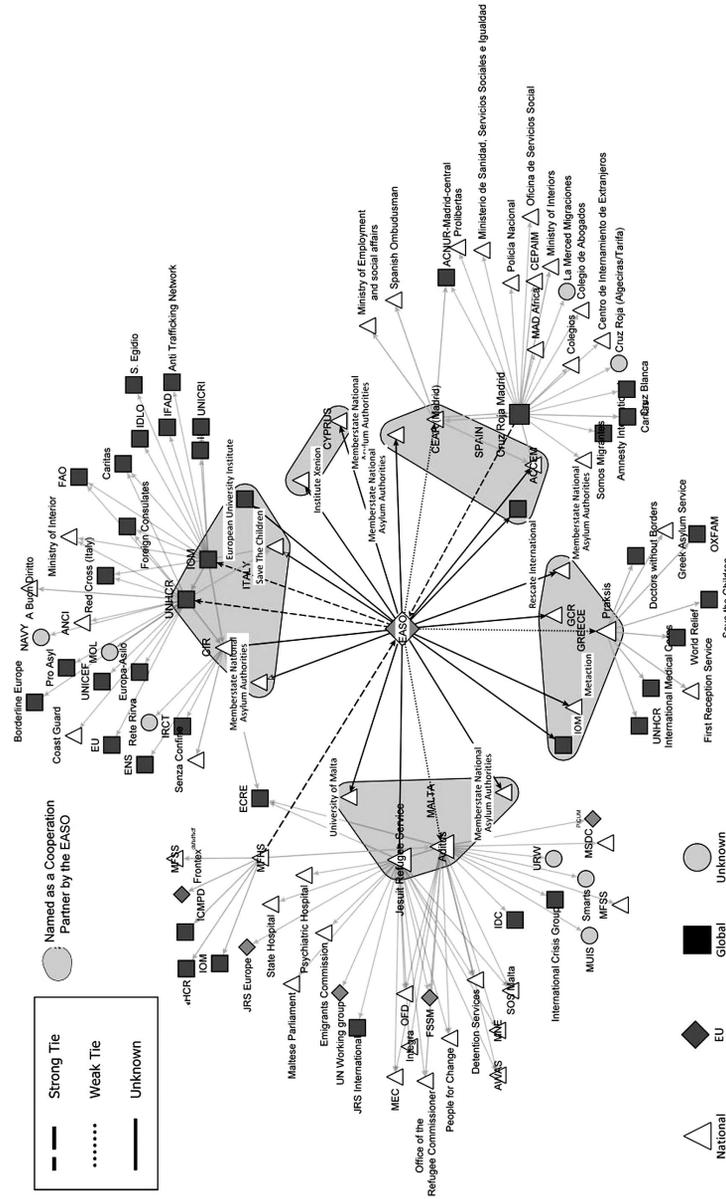
In addition to EASO, Figure 2 shows a total of 106 organisations, of which 21 are cooperation partners identified by EASO, two named EASO as their cooperation partner and 83 make up the egocentric networks of EASO's cooperation partners. The organisations have between 5 and 21 cooperation partners, with an average of 13 cooperation partners.

Concerning Hypothesis (1), let us assume that, as the political agency that supports member states in implementing CEAS, EASO causes isomorphic change in the networks of asylum-related actors, which leads to homogeneous cooperation networks with political actors as their core cooperation partners. We can see a high degree of heterogeneity with regard to the actor type of cooperation partners. Except for the Spanish organisation CEAR, all organisations whose egocentric networks are visualised – regardless of type – cooperate with a variety of different cooperation partners. If we take a closer look at the possible dominance of political actors in the field, the expected effect is not evident. For example, the NGOs (Aditus, PRAKSIS and JRS) cooperate with at least the same number of nongovernmental actors as governmental actors.

Using the previously introduced classification of strong and weak ties, we analysed Figure 2 displaying the type of organisations. In accordance with Hypothesis (1), we would expect that actors who exhibit strong cooperation with EASO would have more homogeneous cooperation network than would the actors with weak ties. This would be the case if the influence DiMaggio and Powell (1983) described in their hypothesis is as strong as expected: as a relevant, state-like agency, EASO would homogenise the field of asylum-related actors. At first glance, the egocentric networks of actors with strong ties to EASO show that, contrary to the assumption, all four actors (MHAS Malta, UNHCR Italy, IOM Italy and Cruz Roja Madrid) cooperate with many different types of organisations and therefore have heterogeneous cooperation networks. If we look at the cooperation partners who have weak ties to EASO, we see exactly the same pattern: Aditus and PRAKSIS, with the exception of CEAR, cooperate with a variety of actor types. Of CEAR's five cooperation partners, four are NGOs. Still, with respect to the type of organisation, a higher level of homogeneity is not clearly evident in the cooperation networks of actors with a strong tie to the EASO.

Figure 3 shows the spatial reach of the organisations. From this perspective, when compared with Figure 2, the egocentric networks of all the organisations displayed show a much higher degree of homogeneity. It is also possible to see trends of cooperation: for example, the two Maltese NGOs (Aditus and JRS) cooperate primarily with organisations that work on the national level. The Greek organisation PRAKSIS cooperates mainly with global actors, as do the UNHCR and IOM Italy. Cruz Roja Madrid cooperates to a much greater extent with national actors than it does with other types of actors. Again, CEAR is an exception in that it cooperates with nearly the same number of national actors and global actors. Based on these findings regarding spatial reach, all organisations except CEAR display a clear tendency towards homogeneous egocentric networks and a lack of cooperation with organisations working on the EU level.

Figure 4: Norms and values of the organisations



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–16.

Concerning Hypothesis (2) and the assessment of Figure 3, the strong-ties cooperation partners of EASO show a high degree of homogeneity in terms of the levels on which their cooperation partners work: MHAS Malta, as well as UNHCR and IOM Italy, cooperate with a much larger number of actors that work on the global level than it does with actors who work on the national or European level, whereas Cruz Roja Madrid cooperates mainly with national actors (see Figure 3). If we look at the organisations with weak ties to EASO, we see the same effect as was evident in the network(s) displaying the types of organisation in Figure 2: there was no difference in the degrees of homogeneity and heterogeneity among the actors' cooperation partners regardless of whether the ties to EASO were strong or weak. Aditus Malta cooperates primarily with organisations that work on the national level, whereas PRAKSIS Greece cooperates more with organisations that work on the global level. Therefore, confirmation of Hypothesis (2) seems unlikely for Figure 3 as well.

Figure 4 shows the norms and values of the organisations that cooperate with EASO and of their cooperation partners. Here, we see the same result as in the analysis of Figure 2, which showed the actor types in the organisations. We can see a small difference when we look at the egocentric networks of the Greek NGO PRAKSIS and the Maltese NGO Aditus, which cooperate with a slightly larger number of human rights-based organisations than with actors that have other norms and values. However, if we sum up all the networks, we see that the organisations cooperate primarily with different types of actors in terms of norms and values, which means that the cooperation networks are relatively heterogeneous.

With regard to Hypothesis (2), Figure 4 shows slightly different results when compared with the two previous visualisations. First, when looking at the organisations with strong ties to EASO, we see fairly heterogeneous cooperation networks. IOM and UNHCR Greece, as well as MHAS Malta and Cruz Roja Madrid, cooperate with nearly the same numbers of actors that are orientated towards human rights, political issues, religious motivations and objectivity, and other rationales. In comparison, all three of the organisations with weak ties to EASO (Aditus, PRAKSIS and CEAR) have relatively homogeneous networks: they too cooperate with different types of actors, but unlike the organisations with strong ties to EASO, they cooperate predominantly with human rights-orientated actors. Therefore, the figure displaying the norms and values of the organisations can be used to falsify Hypothesis (2), which suggests a higher level of homogeneity among the cooperation networks of organisations that have strong ties

to EASO, because the networks of the organisations with weak ties to EASO show an even greater degree of homogeneity in their cooperation partners with respect to their norms and values.

Table 2: State of homogeneity or heterogeneity displayed in the egocentric networks of EASO’s cooperation partners

Characteristics of the organisations	Networks of all actors
<i>Actor type</i>	Heterogeneous
<i>Spatial reach</i>	Homogeneous
<i>Driving norms/values</i>	Relatively heterogeneous
<i>Total</i>	Relatively heterogeneous

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–16.

Table 3: State of homogeneity or heterogeneity displayed in the egocentric networks of EASO’s strong and weak cooperation partners

Characteristics of the organisations	Networks of actors with strong ties to EASO	Networks of actors with weak ties to EASO
<i>Actor type</i>	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous
<i>Spatial reach</i>	Homogeneous	Homogeneous
<i>Driving norms/values</i>	Heterogeneous	Relatively homogeneous
<i>Total</i>	Relatively heterogeneous	Relatively heterogeneous

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–16.

Hypothesis (1) states that EASO, as the political agency that helps member states implement CEAS, causes isomorphic change for the network of asylum-related actors, as evidenced by their homogeneous cooperation networks. However, as discussed previously, this deduction cannot be verified. The visualisation of egocentric networks focusing on type of organisation (Figure 2) and the visualisation of their norms and values (Figure 4) reflect heterogeneous networks, that is to say the organisations cooperate with a variety of different partners. Contrary to the hypothesis based on the theory of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the influence of EASO as a state-like agency and thus homogenising the field of organisations (which would, for example, be evidenced by the domination of state actors in the field) is not seen among the interviewed and displayed organisations. Those NGOs for which egocentric networks are displayed tend to cooper-

ate more with NGOs than with political or state actors, and this occurs more on the national level than on the European level and more with human rights–orientated actors than with political actors. We do not see a shift in the field towards a more institutionalised level with CEAS and EASO as its institutions.

One explanation of this outcome may be that the influence of EASO is not as strong as was expected – a likely explanation considering that EASO only recently began operation, in 2011. It is supported by the results of MAREM 2016, in that the Maltese NGO Aditus described EASO as a very young, evolving agency, and some of the organisations and actors (e.g. in Spain) know very little about EASO. During her interview, Ángeles Cano Linares, a Spanish professor at King Juan Carlos University, stated that “*No one in Spain talks about EASO. I use it a lot for the statistics, but I haven’t seen anything else*” (King Juan Carlos University 2016). This aspect will be analysed in greater depth in the other chapters of this book. Keeping this in mind, the results for Hypothesis (2) will be included and discussed before we can determine the extent to which these findings can falsify the hypothesis formulated by DiMaggio and Powell.

As noted previously, actors that cooperate more closely with EASO do not show a higher degree of isomorphism (i.e. more homogeneous cooperation networks) than do actors that cooperate with EASO less closely; in fact, the opposite seems to be true. Just as the results for Hypothesis (1) tested the hypothesis of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) regarding the expected effect of isomorphism on the field of asylum-related actors, this finding clearly falsifies their assumption. Again, one possible explanation for this conclusion is that EASO is relatively new and may not yet be strong enough. However, other reasons must be taken into account as well. The networks that were analysed previously indirectly suggest a simplicity of the organisations’ networks and their relations to one another, because they display only a few characteristics and omit others that may be relevant to a cooperative relation. This approach was an attempt to clarify the types of cooperation between the organisations and EASO and for this purpose was successful and sufficient. Still, the working field consists of multiple factors that influence the way the organisations work, the way they are structured and, of course, with whom they cooperate. Even if EASO has a strong influence on the organisations, they are also influenced by other actors with whom they cooperate. This possibility may cancel out the influence of the European institution and may explain why the expected effect was not evident in the field of asylum-related organisations.

The data gathered during the MAREM project, along with the present analysis, reveal only a small segment of the processes that influence the asylum system, so it is difficult to make a general statement about the way EASO influences the field of asylum-related actors. Nevertheless, several statements can be made based on the results presented above:

Statement (a): Many different factors can influence the kinds of actors with which an organisation cooperates, and these would need to be researched and assessed on at least as many different levels.

Statement (b): Until now, EASO has had hardly any influence on the work and cooperation of asylum-related actors in the European member states.

Statement (c): EASO is a very young agency, which is why its influence may increase over the next few years and lead to more changes in the field of asylum-related organisations.

Statement (d): Because greater homogeneity in a field does not necessarily lead to greater efficiency, the heterogeneous state of the cooperation networks in the field of asylum around EASO can be assessed as positive for the asylum system.

In support of Statement (d), one might refer, for example, to the special role of NGOs in the asylum system. Not only can we recall EASO's statement from earlier in this chapter (Section 2.1), but we can also cite studies on the important role of NGOs, especially in the politics of human rights. Schmitz (1997) notes that human rights organisations can be understood as a "*response to a constant discrepancy between the commitment, made rhetorically, to comply with and promote human rights and the actual human rights situation*" (p. 30, transl. from the German by the authors). According to Schmitz, NGOs help close the gap in politics between taking on obligations and actually fulfilling those obligations. This was confirmed by the Greek NGO PRAKSIS, which mentioned this specific role of the NGOs and the inability of the Greek government to fill these gaps:

I can talk about the role of an NGO. We are definitely filling important gaps right now. The state does not have the capacity to cover all the necessary spaces for accommodation or for other first needs. We are trying to cooperate closely with the asylum service, and we do have regular meetings on how we will enable people's access to such services. Our driving principle is the best interest of these people (PRAKSIS 2016).

The Greek NGO Antigone also indicates that the NGOs play an important role in the asylum system as a whole:

We cannot have a picture of the work of all the NGOs, but of course they play a very important role, because as you know, there is an absence of government initiative in this area, except for the food, which the Greek Army provi-

des every day; for all the rest, it's the NGOs that give the humanitarian assistance, and without them the situation would be much worse. That's just a general comment about the situation (Antigone 2016).

The Italian organisation A Buon Diritto mentions that NGOs even run official centres where asylum seekers and refugees are accommodated: “NGOs have an important role. For the SPRAR and the other centres, both, they run them, and the other organisations can help them to improve the system” (A Buon Diritto 2016).

2.3 Mimetic Isomorphism/Exchange of Best Practices

In the field of asylum, organisations sometimes try to increase their legitimacy and efficiency by mimicking organisations in their environment. In the case of EASO, with its special role as a European body, this *modus operandi* of copying best practices must be addressed from three different *perspectives*: (a) the extent to which EASO itself copies best practices from other organisations when it comes to their internal workings; (b) the special role of the organisation as a catalyst for cooperation and the exchange of best practices among the member states and asylum-related organisations; and (c) the extent to which these collective practices are being used by the agency itself when it comes to the practical work related to asylum seekers and refugees.

Perspective (a)

In examining the extent to which EASO adopts practices of other organisations in its own internal working procedures, we find that the prospects of this support office has to be quite restricted. As a European institution, the office must act in accordance with default rules and structures and with the clear mandate emerging from EASO Regulation (EU) No. 439/2010, which leaves the institution itself with little scope for improving those procedures:

In terms of good practices on the sort of organisational, administrative side of things, we have very clear structures and rules that are more or less given to us. Procurements are procurements no matter where you are within the EU system (EASO 2016).

On the basis of this factual and legal position, an improvement of practices must be introduced through audit procedures, and these have only recently been carried out:

We have recently had private companies who [improved] certain structures and the way we do certain things around here. And that has been very useful. We have had the internal audit service of the Commission specifically looking at our training activities. [...] They noticed a few things that we had inherent weaknesses in systems where [...] something for example was relying on the input of one person who maybe was going to be ill or was on leave or whatever reason [...]. So there needed to be some improvement of those structural things (EASO 2016).

Such statutory processes made it basically impossible for EASO to adopt the best practices of member states' governmental and nongovernmental organisations for their own internal procedures. This eliminates the chances of isomorphism in EASO's cooperation partners. On the other hand, it determines the mimetic isomorphism processes of EASO and other European bodies while reducing the support office's need for an exchange of best practices to improve their efficiency and legitimacy. In terms of efficiency, well-established structures and practices were handed to them right from the beginning and are being continuously improved by the European Commission, just as a basic level of legitimacy has been afforded EASO by the European Union.

Perspective (b)

The role that EASO assumes for CEAS as an institution can be considered quite special: the office functions as a catalyst for cooperation and the exchange of best practices among the member states and asylum-related organisations. Part of EASO's mandate is to establish a platform for the several actors and countries obligated to implement CEAS: *"It is more like triggering or providing a forum for the cooperation of the member states rather than having one-on-one exchanges, which may have been the practice in the past"* (EASO 2016). According to EASO, this role has led to a different kind of cooperation – one that is increasingly multilateral rather than bilateral. As noted under Perspective (a), they do not copy best practices from those actors themselves, but they actively contribute to an exchange of those practices among their cooperation partners: *"EASO's primary role, [...] when you look at the regulation again, is more to be a catalyst of this practical cooperation among member states"* (EASO 2016). With the possibility for NGOs to participate in the CF, which also serves the purpose of collecting and exchanging best practices, this statement refers to cooperation not only among state institutions but also among NGOs. As was concluded with regard to the network analysis, this may increase the degree of exchange of best practices and enhance mimicking processes among the organisations as the influence of EASO con-

tinues to grow. This influence on cooperation gains a practical component, because at the end of the consulting and discussion processes among the actors involved, it will lead to jointly developed tools that will then be given to the member states and organisations involved in the asylum process for use in their own work.

Perspective (c)

In order to determine the extent to which EASO uses these jointly developed practices and tools – in this case meaning practices that will, as a part of CEAS, be used in the asylum system (processing asylum applications, age assessment procedures, etc.), not practices for their internal working procedures – one must take a closer look at recent developments within the remit of the support office. As the refugee crisis is continuing, the agency has increased the number of its staff members; it also has assumed additional responsibilities and in several member states is becoming increasingly involved in practical work on the ground:

One thing that is important to understand is that we now are – to a certain extent and increasingly – all getting involved in a very practical way as the EASO people. Our colleagues go out into the field and they [...] provide information to migrants or register people who want to be relocated and are eligible to be relocated, so we are getting increasingly involved in practical things (EASO 2016).

In doing this kind of work the staff members of the support office try to apply the newly adopted best practices themselves. As mentioned before, this approach is limited to their work in the field and is not applied to their internal working procedures. Therefore, this information is of no value when it comes to making a statement about the isomorphic processes that occur when organisations mimic one another, and it cannot be used to verify or falsify Hypothesis (3).

2.4 Normative Isomorphism

To work for EASO, a minimum of a third-level education is required:

I think that it is pretty broadly mixed. I mean, everyone who is a staff member here has at least a third-level education. So that is one of the minimum requirements, which in some member states is not necessarily the case; you would have first-instance decision-makers who may not necessarily have a third-level education (EASO 2016).

Only a few examples were given of specific courses that EASO staff members have studied, which include didactics, adult education, law, international relations, politics, Slavic studies and mathematics (EASO 2016). This shows that despite the minimum requirement of a third level education, the entrance requirements are highly varied. Although a high level of expertise is required in the field of work, and thus there is an obvious reliance on academic credentials in choosing personnel, one cannot act on the assumption that isomorphic processes will occur among organisations in the field. The staff members still have very different educational backgrounds. Thus, Hypothesis (4) cannot be verified.

2.5 Expectations of the Environment Towards EASO

The expectations its environment places on EASO can be said to increase with the scope of the office's tasks. The office having been established in 2011, its role is becoming increasingly specific with further development of CEAS and its implementation:

I think that the expectations are growing, which is a good thing. EASO was created so to say in response to an identified need to have an EU agency to work with those issues. You might be familiar with the Green Paper, which was published by the Commission when the idea of EASO was first explored, and then it was formulated in a certain way. And now with the challenges we told you about I think that the expectations of what EASO can practically do are growing every day [...] (EASO 2016).

Killian O'Brien explains that EASO is expected to work efficiently while at the same time expanding as an organisation:

What people expect from EASO is absolutely huge at the moment. [...] But one of the difficulties for us is to try to increase the operational capacity and keep everything as it was. [...] So to keep all of that going as well as increasing, I don't know, it is hard to quantify but it is at least ten times the operational support that we are doing specifically on the ground. That is one of the biggest expectations. To keep those plates spinning, as they were, at the same time (EASO 2016).

It is likely that those expectations will change with changes in EASO's mandate (ibid). For example, in April 2016, the European Commission has proposed that EASO should be transformed into a "EU-level first-instance decision-making agency, with national branches in each member state" (COM 2016). Such a change would include a large number of addi-

tional responsibilities and tasks and also may lead to entirely new and even greater expectations.

2.6 State of CEAS Implementation

The CEAS regulations and directives are extremely important to the work of asylum-related organisations. To analyse the influence of CEAS, one must determine how the different organisations assess the state of its implementation. This has been done for the organisations separately by each of the MAREM country groups – as has the comparison of the different perceptions of the state of implementation within each of the countries – and of course must be reflected at EASO, which is responsible for implementing CEAS.

Because CEAS must be regarded as the fundamental structure of the asylum policy in Europe and of the work being done in the asylum- and refugee-related field, and because it not only functions on the legal level but also causes many practical changes within this field, it is difficult to identify suitable criteria for evaluating its implementation. The critical situation in Europe in 2015/16 and the rapid inflow of migrants also make an appraisal difficult: *“I mean, obviously, in broad terms, in terms of numbers, how do you assess CEAS? There is huge, huge pressure on it. It is huge pressure on everything that goes with it, with Schengen and all”* (EASO 2016).

The following statements highlight the distinction between the legal and practical dimensions of CEAS. Jadwiga Maczynska cautiously considers that the legal setting of CEAS is about to be finalised:

Again, it depends on which dimension you take. If you look at the level or advancement [of] the legal framework, one might risk stating that it is very advanced because after there was a recast process whereby the legal instruments building the legal framework of the CEAS have been kind of finalised [...] that we are now moving more to the practical element of it. So the legal framework has been more or less agreed on. That comes with a huge development of the on-going crisis which is now affecting many, also legal, elements of the system (EASO 2016).

Pursuing this distinction, she states that the legal launch of CEAS has made considerable progress and by now *“it is all about the practical implementation”* (EASO 2016). In order to assess the state of CEAS, it is important to note that it is highly processual; changes in its regulations

and directives are made not out of thin air but only after they have been run through certain stages of assessment.

There may be issues in the procedures and decisions that CEAS has not yet covered in full, especially concerning the crisis in Europe, but with the on-going realisation of CEAS such issues will be revealed, first on a legal level and then on a practical level. These cases must be assessed by the European Court of Justice, whose decisions may result in further adjustments to CEAS. Because this is a process that by its nature takes a certain amount of time, the legal implementation can hardly ever be regarded as completed but rather needs to be regarded as a circle of continuing harmonisation:

You will see an increase in the harmonisation in terms of the understanding of the various directives and regulations, simply because we are now seeing more and more cases arriving at the Court of Justice, specifically about asylum issues. [...] They are now sort of trickling through, a lot of them are still relevant. But now, again, there will most likely be decisions coming through on new stuff, and that is going to be really important. You will see further harmonisation in the coming years... It will be a process. And obviously, at the moment, the Court of Justice takes about 16 months to come up with a decision. It will take a couple of years at least before you will see some progress (EASO 2016).

2.7 Major Challenges

EASO is confronted with various challenges and must resolve a number of difficulties. The on-going crisis situation is posing an obstacle to the establishment of consistent policies, as reflected in these two statements from EASO:

One of the biggest challenges for us as an organisation is the fact that the situation is changing so quickly, the situation changes day to day, and the single action of one member state or even non-member state can have incredible knock-on effects. You have seen it most recently with the closing of certain borders (EASO 2016).

From my perspective, the immediate challenge right now has of course to do with the on-going migration/asylum crisis Europe is experiencing. And this is definitely and in many ways something that is unprecedented. It is a strong logistical and operational challenge, not to mention the humanitarian and human factor dimension (EASO 2016).

These statements also show the difficulties faced in maintaining the day-to-day business and the continuous development of EASO. O'Brien em-

phasises this fact by pointing out the steady growth of CEAS in response to the continuing crisis:

In terms of our organisational structure, we are experiencing growing pains at the moment in that we are moving from a relatively small organisation to a much larger organisation and expanding because the current situation has become more and more relevant on a political scale, and obviously we need to be able to react to that (EASO 2016).

Maczynska also indicates the possibility of progressing the work as an agency and of expanding cooperation and the relationship with the different partners:

That (the crisis) puts us – as EASO – in a very challenging position also giving us opportunities to develop and to improve our work. Since we have been operational as an agency for close to 5 years now, we are also still in the phase when we are adjusting in the way we see our role and the way we cooperate with stakeholders. So for me those would be the main challenges right now: the ongoing crisis and the need for EASO to find the best way to explore its mandate under these challenging circumstances (EASO 2016).

3. Conclusion

One of the main results of this chapter is that EASO plays a special role within the asylum system, because it functions as a catalyst for cooperation among the member states and, in part, among civil society organisations. By collecting and sharing best practices, this office contributes to a more common way of working among the member states and thereby helps CEAS to become more common as well. However, EASO influences governmental actors to a much greater extent than it influences non-governmental organisations. Whether it would be more beneficial for the asylum system, if the cooperation with NGOs and civil society was increased or approached differently shall in this framework be left up to the matter of opinion. With the growing influence and increasing clarity of its mandate however, – especially as far as the acceleration and improvement of cooperation are concerned – EASO has helped to move the process of implementing CEAS forward steadily, as well as cumulatively on a practical level. Obviously, this conclusion holds only to a degree, because it is based on statements made by EASO itself.

Our analysis of EASO's influence on its cooperation partners and their networks showed at its best a tendency towards homogeneity, meaning that the hypothesis concerning homogeneity in its cooperation partners'

networks could not be verified. In addition, actors with either strong or weak ties to EASO showed nearly the same level of homogeneity, or rather heterogeneity of their networks. Even those organisations with weak ties to EASO appeared to have networks with a higher degree of homogeneity (thus contradicting our hypothesis), which underpins this conclusion. As also indicated by the EASO itself, the visible heterogeneity in the networks of organisations operating in the field of asylum can be rated as thoroughly positive, allowing the system to more effectively address the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

CEAS provides a framework for a highly complex field that includes manifold actors and levels, and these must be taken into account in order to assess the actual state of CEAS. This assessment is likely to turn out to be at least slightly different for each country in which it is implemented, and it is almost impossible to make final conclusions, because the situation is constantly changing – just as the political and migratory situation.

For a more critical assessment that reflects the actual situation in the member states, it would be necessary to include their opinions about the role and influence of the office to determine, whether EASO's assessment of its role, as presented here, matches the reality. This perspective to some extent will be illuminated in the other chapters on each of the MAREM countries studied, especially concerning NGOs opinions on the role of the EASO.

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Interviews (2016) with the following organisations:

A Buon Diritto
Aditus
ANTIGONE
CEAR
Cruz Roja Madrid
EASO
IOM Italy
King Juan Carlos University
MHAS
PRAKSIS

Cyprus Report

Amanda Culver, Lara Elliott, Megan Costello, Thomas Norpoth

1. Introduction

Cyprus is a small island located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, 97 km west of Syria and 64 km south of Turkey.¹ Cyprus has a population of 1,2 million inhabitants (Statista 2016a) and a total area of 9,251 km² (Statista 2016b), making it the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia.² Previously under the rule of Great Britain, the island became independent in 1960, but following a Cypriot coup d'état in 1974 Turkish troops invaded the island. This caused Greek and Turkish Cypriots to flee to separate sides of the island, which resulted in thousands being internally displaced. At present, Turkish forces continue to occupy one third of the island and have established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), while the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) controls the remaining two thirds, effectively dividing the island (BBC 2016). While both sides have long since ceased fighting and currently live in a state of accord, UN Peacekeepers continue to monitor the division due to the hostility between the two population groups (DOS 2015). In 2004, the RoC joined the European Union (EU), which has since influenced the country's politics and its societal outlook. For the purpose of this chapter, we focus on the situation in the RoC as a member state of the EU. In only a few instances reference to the Turkish part of the island is necessary.

One of the requirements imposed by the EU on its member states is the adoption of a state-run asylum system. Before the RoC joined the EU, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was responsible for all asylum-related procedures in this state, but now the RoC has successfully taken over and implemented their own state-run asylum system and procedures.

1 <http://www.kypros.org/CyprusPanel/cyprus/geography.html> 2016.

2 <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Cyprus.html> 2016.

Although the Cypriot³ economy has been slowly recovering since the 2012/13 European financial crisis and the Cypriots being among the most prosperous people in the *Mediterranean* region, with GDP per capita of \$22,903 in 2015, the effects of the crisis continue to be felt within the RoC (Statista 2016c). In 2013, the unemployment rate reached an all-time high of 16,9%. In recent years, it has slowly decreased, and as of July 2016, it has remained at 11,6% (Statista 2016d). However, it becomes apparent that further improvement in the Cypriot economic sector is still required when one compares Cyprus with its fellow EU member state Malta. Similar to Cyprus, Malta is a small island in the periphery of the EU that has an annual GDP growth rate of 5,2% and in 2016 has an unemployment rate of only 4,9% (Trading Economics 2016c). In addition to a moderately high unemployment rate in general, problems within the Cypriot⁴ labour market remain, including significantly high youth unemployment that currently stands at 24% and long-term unemployment that has decreased in recent years to 5,8% (Trading Economics 2016a; EC 2016).

Regarding a more recent European development, the European refugee crisis, the RoC received a total of 1,560 applicants for asylum between January and September 2015, according to the *AIDA's Country Report: Cyprus* (ECRE 2015a). The majority of applicants (1,075) received subsidiary protection, while 360 applications were rejected, leaving only 95 persons receiving refugee status (ECRE 2015a: 6). Thus, the rate at which the RoC recognises refugee status is one of the lowest in Europe. For example, in 2015, Germany granted refugee status to 48,5% of its applicants for asylum (BAMF 2016: 7). Many of the asylum seekers arriving in the RoC come from Syria in response to the ongoing conflict that has led many people to flee to Europe. Other countries of origin include Palestine,⁵ Vietnam and India (see Tables 1 and 2).

3 Refers to the TRNC and the RoC.

4 Refers to the TRNC and the RoC.

5 According to the UN, Palestinian refugees are those who had lived in mandated Palestine from 1946 to 1948 (UNRWA 2016).

Table 1: Overview of applications and status granted in Cyprus in 2015 (January–September)

	Total number	Rate (%)
Refugee status	95	6,2
Subsidiary protection	1,075	70,2
Rejection	360	23,6
Total	1,560	100

Source: Adapted from ECRE (2015a: 6).

Table 2: Total numbers of applicants and rejections in Cyprus in 2015 (January–September) by country of origin

Country of origin	Total number of applicants	Rejection rate (%)
Syria	705	0
Palestine	95	0
Vietnam	95	100
Stateless	65	0
India	65	100
Pakistan	65	100
Egypt	60	77,7
Iraq	55	0
Bangladesh	45	100
Sri Lanka	45	100
Somalia	40	no data

Source: Adapted from ECRE (2015a: 6).

Statistics from 2016 show that the main countries of origin remain the same as in 2015 (Eurostat 2016). The number of asylum applications does not vary much either: in the first half of 2016 1,145 people applied for asylum in Cyprus (Eurostat 2016b). In other terms, there were 1,353 asylum applicants per million inhabitants in this period of time (Eurostat 2016c). The total recognition rate currently is the same as in Spain, namely, 71 % (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). Subsidiary protection was given in Cyprus in 62 % of cases in the same period of time (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). In total, 1,100 decisions on asylum applications were made there in the first half of 2016, 325 of them were rejected (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e).

The Cypriot asylum procedure is a single procedure in which the applications submitted by people seeking protection are reviewed and either

refugee or subsidiary protection status is granted or the application is rejected. An asylum application can be lodged at all points of entry, at any police station in the RoC and from detention centres or prisons. The Aliens and Immigration Unit receives and processes all asylum applications. They also register all applications in the common data system managed by the Asylum Service and fingerprint each applicant. The Asylum Service examines these applications, including the Dublin Regulation criteria, and is responsible for all other asylum-related issues, including management of the reception centre Kofinou, which is located 4 km from the nearest residential area and a further 40 km away from Nicosia (KISA 2008). The final decisions that can be made by the Asylum Service include granting an asylum seeker refugee status, subsidiary protection or rejecting their application.

As Table 1 shows, the Cypriot authorities grant subsidiary protection rather than giving asylum applicants a refugee status. A person is considered an asylum seeker from the day his or her application has been lodged until he or she is notified of the final decision. Normally, the procedure, which takes a maximum of six months to complete, consists of an examination of the application, a possible interview with the asylum seeker and a final decision. However, there is the possibility of an accelerated procedure in which specific time limits for issuing the final decision and for submitting an appeal are imposed, which may shorten the waiting time (ECRE 2015b). Although this option is expected to be adopted in national legislation, it is not yet adopted in practice. Most of the time the regular procedure is used, though a fast-tracked regular procedure can be applied to prioritised applications from asylum seekers fleeing unsafe countries of origin or in humanitarian crises. As mentioned above, appeals to final decisions can also be made. One could also appeal against both the ruling of subsidiary protection status and rejection through an administrative appeal before the Refugee Reviewing Authority and a judicial appeal before the Supreme Court. The Refugee Reviewing Authority examines the content of an application and points of law, whereas the Supreme Court decides only in regards to the law and does not examine the content of an asylum claim (ECRE 2015b). Although the applicant is considered an asylum seeker through the above processes, the law does not permit applicants to remain in the country, making them vulnerable to detention and deportation (ECRE 2015b). As can be seen in Table 2, the rejection rate in 2015 according to nationality is mostly either 100 % or 0 %, showing that only asylum seekers from Syria, Palestine and Iraq and those who are consid-

ered stateless have a realistic chance of being granted subsidiary protection or even refugee status.

This chapter presents research results from six expert interviews conducted with a number of asylum-related organisations based in Nicosia, Cyprus. First, the current situation in this field of research will be examined. A short overview of existing studies related to the MAREM research topic will be given in the next section (Current State of Research), followed by an explanation of the research hypotheses. Finally, the data and results will be reviewed and the final conclusions will be presented.

2. *Current State of Research*

In the early stages of research, it was important to obtain an overview of existing studies related to cooperation networks in Cyprus and/or the role of Cypriot asylum-related organisations. It soon became obvious that very little research had been done concerning the cooperation of organisations in Cyprus. Nevertheless, several academic articles were beneficial in the research for the MAREM project.

Cetta Mainwaring (2012) examined the role that the Cypriot and Maltese governments wish to play within the EU in relation to migration, both regular and irregular, since these states joined the EU in 2004. Her article addresses the attempts of Malta and the RoC to influence migration on a European level. Despite their not having much power within the EU, Mainwaring concludes that the two states rely on “*non-material power*” (p. 17) to challenge distalisation and influence the migration policies of the EU. In addition, the article reveals how the EU migration policies place unfair and disproportionate responsibility on the peripheral member states and how this highlights the lack of harmonisation at the European level.

In an earlier article, Mainwaring (2008) outlined the new migration policies that Cyprus and Malta have and continue to experience since obtaining EU membership, which is influenced by a division on an EU level, emphasising the economic, political and other factors of Mediterranean countries. Mainwaring examined how Cyprus and Malta seek short-term rather than long-term control, which has made the response to the issue of integration quite challenging. She further concludes that the negative consequences of certain policies are due to a fight for power between member states, which is justified by the need to protect the security of citizens. In

addition, given the ongoing exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, she points to the existence of continuous discrimination at all levels, thus making integration a formidable obstacle.

Christalla Yakinthou and Öncel Polili (2010) discussed the rights of both asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus, noting that recent arrivals are a relatively new occurrence on the island – an aspect that can be explained by the current state of division in Cyprus. In addition, they concluded that a *“lack of dialogue and cooperation has had a negative impact on the human rights of the asylum seekers and refugees from third countries”* (Yakinthou and Polili 2010: 5). In this report, the authors proposed policies to improve the asylum process and the daily experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. These include the need for more dialogue between the two parts of the island so that smugglers or human traffickers do not exploit asylum seekers. Also, the Turkish side needs to adopt certain asylum policies of the EU to ensure the protection of asylum seekers, thus addressing the overall structural faults in Northern Cyprus.

An examination of the current state of the research indicates a gap concerning the collaboration of organisations with regard to asylum issues in Cyprus. Furthermore, there was no information on cooperation partners of asylum-related organisations in Cyprus and no visible research had been carried out on organisational networks. The MAREM project was conceived to close this research gap by posing the following questions related to Cyprus:

- What roles do the asylum-related organisations and their cooperation networks play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus?
- What role do Cypriot⁶ organisations and their organisational cooperation networks play in the implementation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS)?
- Can a gap be found between talk and action when one examines official declarations of the European and/or the Cypriot governments and the actual implementation of decisions and the actions of the national organisations?
- To what extent does the implementation of CEAS affect the work of the asylum-related organisations in Cyprus?

6 In reference to the RoC.

- Has the recent exacerbation of the refugee crisis resulted in any changes in the arrival, settlement and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus?

This chapter will answer these questions using the data collected in 2016. The results based on the analysis of the cooperation networks of relevant Cypriot organisations will be presented in the sections that follow.

3. Hypotheses

When examining Cyprus, the following aspects must be taken into account before a connection can be made between the Cypriot organisational network and the concepts of neo-institutionalism and isomorphism (explained in the first chapter of this book) (see DiMaggio and Powell 1983). First, it is important to bear in mind that Cyprus is a small country, with an area of only 9,250 km² – approximately 39 times smaller than Germany (Visit Cyprus 2016). Because of its limited size and its location, one can expect a drastically smaller network when Cyprus is compared with larger inland countries. Second, the lack of large cities or metropolises on the island would suggest that the range or variety of organisations would be small because the space and need for organisations in this field are limited. With Cyprus being a small country, a few organisations might suffice to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, whereas larger countries might require a larger number of organisations in order to provide the best possible work and service for people in need. On a local level, this might even lead to a closer, better functioning network among organisations. Furthermore, Cyprus received only 1,560 asylum applications from January to September 2015 (ECRE 2015a: 6), rendering a large number of asylum-related organisations redundant. Cyprus may already have been sufficiently equipped for such a low number of arrivals, whereas other European countries may have had an urgent need for such organisation to deal with larger numbers of arrivals. Here, one could also predict an expansion and stabilisation of existing organisations and their cooperation networks rather than the emergence of new organisations. Lastly, the Cypriot government took control of the asylum procedure only after Cyprus had become a member state of the EU in 2004, making its asylum system a relatively new one, which could in turn reflect on the relatively new and perhaps inexperienced Cypriot government organisations and agencies.

Based on these important aspects of Cyprus and thus the expected organisational field of asylum-related issues, the process of mimetic isomorphism was regarded as the most applicable (for further information, see the first chapter of this book). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 151), when “*goals are ambiguous, or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty, organisations may model themselves on other organizations*”, leading to mimetic isomorphism (p. 151). A response to this *uncertainty* and key factor of mimetic isomorphism is what theorists call modelling. DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 152) note that organisations model themselves after other organisations that they believe to be more legitimate and successful.

Given this theoretical element of mimetic isomorphism under neo-institutionalism and Cyprus’ key characteristics discussed above, the following hypotheses worded by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) can be regarded as relevant to the research in Cyprus and can serve as a basis for analysing the collected data on the Cypriot cooperation networks:

1. “*The more uncertain the relationship between means and ends, the greater the extent to which an organisation will model itself after organisations it perceives to be successful*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 154). Because Cyprus took over the asylum procedure as recently as 2004, neither the organisations nor the state were fully confident in their work yet and the pressure to achieve legitimacy was strong. Therefore, Cypriot organisations have tended to model themselves after well-established organisations in order to achieve legitimation and work efficiently by emulating best practices.
2. “*The fewer the number of visible alternative organisational models in a field, the faster the rate of isomorphism in that field*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 155). Because Cyprus is a small country with a recently established asylum system, not many of the organisations have long-standing experience. This can cohere with to isomorphic processes among the asylum-related organisations and to their becoming more homogeneous in their structure and work.

In the following section, we will examine whether these hypotheses could be verified during the research. An explanation of how the research was carried out and what data⁷ were used will now be outlined.

4. Data

In preparation for the excursion to Cyprus and the collection of data, relevant asylum-related organisations were selected for interviewing and website analyses. Because most of these organisations are based in Nicosia, the capital of the RoC, this city was chosen as the place to carry out our research. From among the several organisations contacted, the following agreed to participate: the Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (CARDET), Hope for Children, Cyprus Stop Trafficking, the German Embassy Nicosia, Caritas Cyprus and the Future Worlds Center (FWC). During their visit to Nicosia (22–26 February 2016), members of the MAREM research group and the authors of this chapter conducted semi-structured expert interviews to answer the research questions listed in Section 2. Table 3 provides a complete list of the organisations interviewed, along with information regarding their spatial reach, type, driving norms, main issues and resources.

Table 3 provides a brief overview of the interviewees of the MAREM research project in Cyprus in 2016. A more detailed description of these organisations and the work they do, along with information about their co-operation networks, will be given in the next section.

7 For information on data collection and the methods used, the first chapter of this book.

Table 3: Names and relevant characteristics of interviewed asylum-related organisations in Cyprus

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms	Main issues	Resources
CARDET	International	NGO	Objectivity	Education	Mixed
Hope for Children UNCRC Policy Center	International	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to children's rights	Mixed
Cyprus Stop Trafficking	National	NGO	Human rights	Issues related to victims of trafficking	Mixed
German Embassy Nicosia	International	GO	Political representation of Germany	Multiple issues	Funding by the German government
Caritas Cyprus	National	NGO	Religious values	Humanitarian aid	Mixed
FWC	National	NGO	Human rights	Future orientation	Project-based funding

Source: Adapted from MAREM expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2016. NGO = non-governmental organisation; GO = governmental organisation.

5. Results

In this section, we present the results of the expert interviews conducted with six asylum-related organisations based in Nicosia, Cyprus. First, the analysis of the organisations' networks will be discussed. Our initial focus will be on two of these groups – Caritas Cyprus and CARDET – which will serve as examples of the Cypriot organisations (5.1.1). Thereafter, we will examine the network of all the Cypriot organisations interviewed by the MAREM research team in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (5.1.2). This is followed by a brief description of the organisations' projects and tasks and their roles in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus and Europe (5.2). In the final section, we present these organisations' views on Europe, CEAS and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) (5.3.) and conclude with a summary of the project's results (6).

5.1 Network analysis

A major focus of the MAREM project is the role that organisations and their networks play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus. Therefore, it is important at the outset to illustrate the network⁸ of asylum-related organisations, starting with those we interviewed. Here, the egocentric networks of two selected organisations – Caritas Cyprus and CARDET – will be analysed (5.2.1). In addition, we will take a closer look at the established networks of asylum-related organisations and at their cooperation partners (5.2.2).

5.1.1 Caritas Cyprus and CARDET: Two Examples of Egocentric Network Analysis in Cyprus

a) Caritas Cyprus and its cooperation network

“Because of the characteristics of Caritas, an organisation in the small country of Cyprus, working on a local basis together with the local community is important and serves to be the most effective” (Caritas 2016).

Since the beginning of its work, Caritas has established a close network that has remained stable throughout the years (Caritas 2016). As a national NGO, it cooperates with other national organisations that provide different services, outsourcing people and workers to satisfy the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Caritas states that although expansion of the network is desirable, it is impossible due to understaffing, overwork and lack of resources. Like many other national NGOs, Caritas depends on donations and volunteers because it does not receive funding from the EU or the Cypriot government. On the one hand, cooperation is very important because Caritas cannot offer help for every need, so assistance from other NGOs is necessary. On the other hand, the organisation is able to provide services and assistance that other NGOs are unable to offer. An overview

8 The MAREM project does not aim to examine the entire network of asylum-related organisations in Cyprus. Rather, the focus lies on egocentric networks of some of these organisations in Nicosia. (For more information on egocentric networks and the organisational networks, see the first chapter of this book.) Note that in this book, “the network” refers only to specific parts of the network. “Networks” refers to the egocentric networks of the interviewed organisations.

of the cooperation partners of Caritas, their driving norms and their main issues is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Profiles of Caritas and its cooperation partners

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms and values	Main issues	Resources
Caritas Cyprus (interviewed organisation)	National	NGO	Religious	Humanitarian aid	Mixed, mainly donations
Red Cross Cyprus	National	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues	Mixed
KISA	National	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to discrimination in all forms	Mixed
FWC	National	NGO	Human rights	Future orientation, asylum and migration	Project-based funding
Hope for Children UNCRC Policy Center	International	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to children's rights	Mixed
Asylum Service	national	GO	National policy	Public service, migration, asylum	Internal

Source: Adapted from MAREM expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2016.

In order to provide the best service for those in need, these organisations divide their work and specialise in certain areas. The Asylum Service is the initial contact for asylum seekers and regular migrants in Cyprus, so cooperation with this organisation is essential. This is a one-way relationship, in that the Asylum Service transfers asylum seekers and refugees to Caritas, but not the other way around. Cooperation with other Cypriot NGOs such as the Red Cross, the Movement for Equality, Support, Anti-Racism (KISA), FWC and Hope for Children occurs on the national level, because all these groups work directly in the field along with the people they serve. An exchange of knowledge and help takes place on a daily basis, which ensures the best service possible. For example, asylum seekers and refugees with unclear legal status or mental health issues are sent to FWC, where they can be given legal and psychological support. Caritas offers everyday-life support and provides shelter. For these reasons, KISA refers asylum seekers and refugees to Caritas. The Red Cross supplies asylum seekers with food and is able to assist them with basic needs; however, for further assistance they are sent to Caritas. Hope for Children con-

tacts Caritas when the minors they shelter reach the age of 18 and are no longer entitled to the support this organisation provides (Caritas 2016). Each organisation relies on the quality of work of their network partners. According to one staff member of Caritas, each organisation is expected to carry out the services it is set up to provide, adding that “*it is impossible to do a fantastic job for every single person due to the limitations [Caritas and the other organisations] have*”. Therefore, their daily work “*is a learning curve for everyone all the time*”, and they try to investigate and apply the best practices whenever they can (Caritas 2016).

The network of Caritas is homogeneous with respect to actor type and spatial reach insofar as most of the cooperation partners are NGOs operating nationwide but with a focus on individual locales, because direct work with asylum seekers and refugees requires local setups. Caritas, being a global organisation, has different national branches, such as the one in Nicosia where the interviews for the MAREM project took place. However, a certain level of interdependency has clearly been established among these branches, which are similar in their structure and driven by the same norms. Because no single organisation has the capacity to offer all the services needed, the work is divided into different functions, with specialisation in different areas.

b) CARDET and its cooperation network

“The nature of this organisation is built on cooperation” (CARDET 2016).

For CARDET, the cooperation network must be tight and functioning for an organisation to thrive. Because CARDET is a project-based organisation with both Europe-wide and local projects, the development of collaborations with other organisations has proved to be not only useful but a sheer necessity. CARDET claims to be a very inclusive organisation that is always looking for new cooperation partners in order to empower their own position and to learn about new fields. Sotiris Themistokleous, Assistant Director of CARDET, states that the organisation definitely intends to expand its cooperation network. The profiles of CARDET’s current cooperation partners are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Profiles of CARDET and its cooperation partners

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms	Main issues	Resources
CARDET	International	NGO	Social science	Education	Mixed
FWC	National	NGO	Human rights	Future orientation, asylum and migration	Project-based funding
KISA	National	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to discrimination in all forms	Mixed
Caritas Cyprus	Local	NGO	Religious	Humanitarian aid	Mixed
NGO Support Center	International	NGO	Development	Development	Mixed
Ministry of Education	National	GO	National policy	Public service	Internal
University of Nicosia	National	Academic	Objectivity	Education, research	Mixed

Source: Adapted from MAREM expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2016.

Owing to its unique combination of scientific background, implementation skills and policy development, CARDET sees itself as *“a link between public services, universities and grassroots organisations”* (CARDET 2016). It serves as a platform to coordinate cooperation. In the field of public services, CARDET has established cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Interior, whose aim is to help with decision-making, advocacy and the adoption of tools and policy from CARDET and its cooperation partners in the scientific sector. CARDET also works with universities (e.g. the schools of education and the social work departments of Cypriot universities such as the University of Nicosia) to create and develop scientific content. CARDET also collaborates with grassroots organisations that provide services directly to migrants (e.g. FWC, KISA) (CARDET 2016). According to Sotiris Themistokleous, the network is adjustable and changes *“depending on the issues that are faced and depending on the needs”* (CARDET 2016). For example, CARDET strengthened its collaboration with FWC through workshops and training, whereas direct work with KISA has ebbed due to *“a drift in direction”* (CARDET 2016). Themistokleous states that CARDET is known for working locally, so those in its surrounding environment expect it to deliver high-quality services. He believes CARDET to be unique, especially in regards to their horizontal structure and lack of a

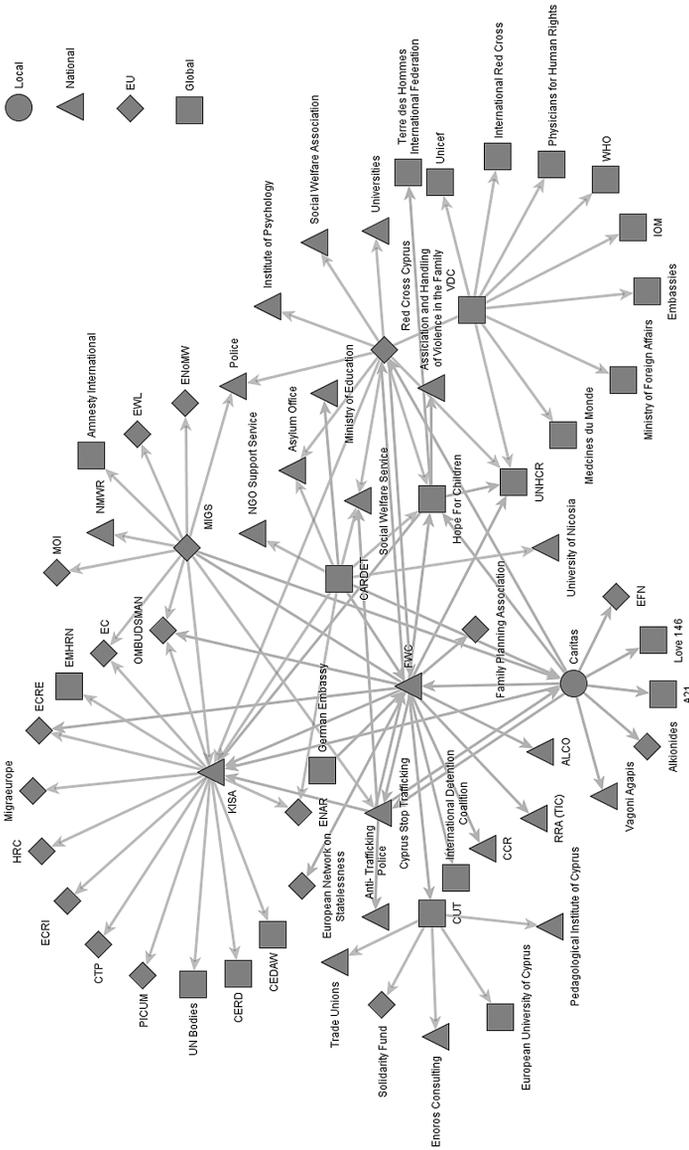
strict hierarchy. Although he does admit that he is “*jealous of organisations that do less work, but have a higher visibility*” (CARDET 2016), CARDET is actively trying to make its work more visible to the public. CARDET’s network is very heterogeneous; it works not only with other NGOs but also with government organisations and has cooperation partners in academic fields, and while CARDET works on an international level, its partners’ spatial reach ranges from local to international.

Based on the above examination of the networks of Caritas and CARDET, it can be said that the two organisations differ in their objectives and ways of working. Their similarities and differences can be seen within their cooperation network. Both work mainly with national organisations. However, CARDET has a more heterogeneous network, because it works with government organisations and NGOs on an international level but also has partners in the academic field, while Caritas has a more homogeneous network with regard to spatial reach and type of organisation, because it works with Cyprus-based NGOs that provide their services at a grassroots level. Caritas is content with the stable network they have and owing to its limited resources finds it difficult to expand its network, because it needs employees and time to build up new cooperations, neither of which Caritas has. In addition, Caritas fulfils the hypothetical assumptions that organisations will model themselves after other organisations in the same field and that an organisation will model itself after organisations that it perceives to be successful, whereas CARDET does not. Instead, CARDET is more independent than the other organisations we interviewed, and while it strives to achieve a collaborating network, it tries to expand its network beyond the local and national levels. It should also be noted that although CARDET named several Cypriot organisations as network partners, these organisations did not name CARDET as one. One explanation for this discrepancy could be that, compared with CARDET, most of the other organisations more often work hands-on in the field with asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, the interviewees were asked to state their most important cooperation partners, and the contract with CARDET may not be among the most essential ones owing to the differences in the focus of their work.

5.1.2 The Networks of Asylum-Related Organisations in Cyprus

Throughout the three MAREM research rounds, which took place in 2014, 2015 and 2016, interviews with eleven asylum-related organisations were conducted in Cyprus. Some of them, such as FWC, Caritas and CARDET, were interviewed two or three times. Based on the interview data, we created network visualisations. The eleven organisations can be found in the centre and the organisations that were mentioned as partners by the interviewees can be found at the periphery. Arrows make the connections between the organisations evident; they point away from the interviewee and in the direction of their partners. The first part of the network analysis focuses on the general cooperations, which were reported in the past, and the second part focuses on the current networks based on the information gathered from the research conducted in 2016.

Figure 1: Spatial reach and cooperations of the Cypriot asylum-related organisations



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2014–16 using Visone.

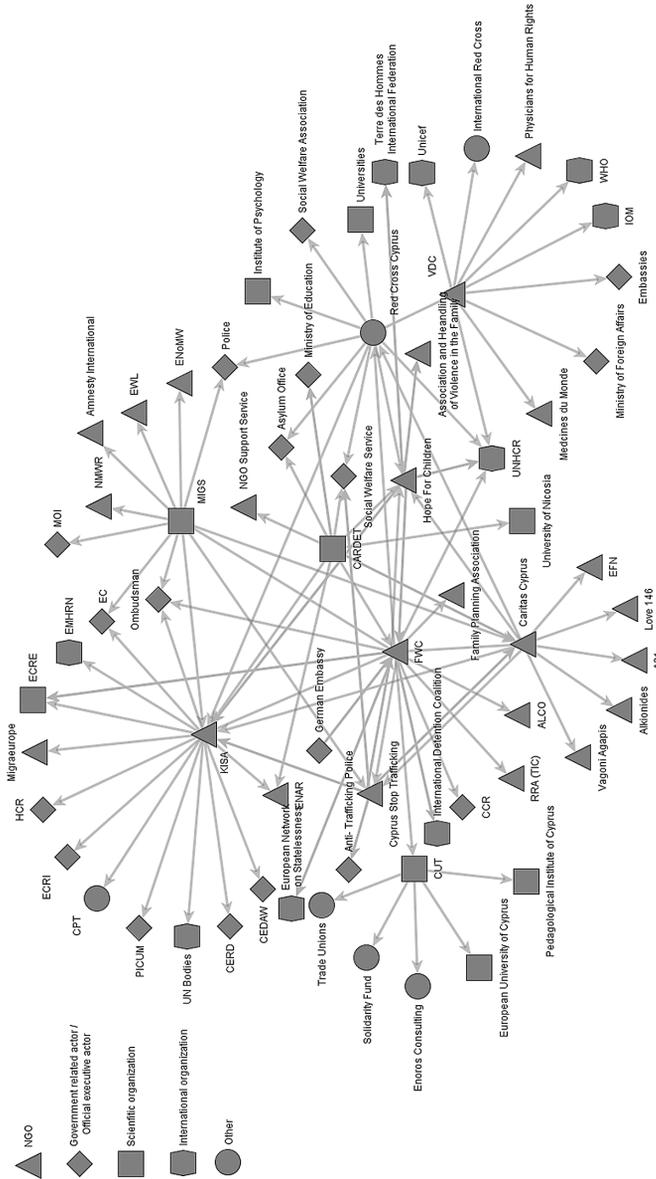
Regarding their spatial reach, a Cypriot organisation has on average ten cooperation partners,⁹ of which five are national organisations, two work on the EU level and three are global organisations. At this point, one can recognise a homogeneity tendency.¹⁰ Considering the hypotheses listed previously, one could say that isomorphic processes are visible with regard to the organisations' spatial reach.

Regarding their values (Figure 2), a Cypriot organisation has again on average ten cooperation partners. In general, six of them work in the field of human rights or humanitarianism. In the other areas of driving norms, there is an average of one organisation in each (political/enforcement of law 1,09, objectivity 0,91, religious 0,64 and other driving norms 0,55). Because most of the organisations claim to share the same norms and values, one can identify isomorphic processes in the field of the driving norms of the Cypriot organisations. Most of the organisations are human rights-oriented. Government organisations claim to act in accordance with political decisions and Cypriot law. Only a few actors remain objective, namely academic research organisations such as CARDET and institutions such as the University of Nicosia. With regard to the driving norms, one can say that there are isomorphic tendencies among the organisations. In particular, organisations of the same type share the same norms and values.

⁹ Numbers in this section are rounded up.

¹⁰ The interviewed organisations were asked to name up to ten of their most important cooperation partners. Due to this limited information, the networks may be incomplete.

Figure 3: Actor type and cooperation partners of the Cypriot asylum-related organisations



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2014–16 using Visone.

Regarding the type of organisation (Figure 3), a Cypriot organisation has on average ten cooperation partners (five non-governmental organisations, two government-related actors and/or official executive actors, one scientific organisation, one intergovernmental organisation, and one other types of organisation). Again, one can identify an inclination towards homogeneous networks in terms of type of organisation. Although there are only few government actors with whom the NGOs work, the networks of the NGOs mainly consist of cooperation partners of the same type.

The six organisations interviewed in 2016 have an average of five cooperation partners, with a concentration on the local level. This can be explained by the type of work carried out by these organisations. Direct contact and work with asylum seekers and refugees takes place on a local level even though nationwide planning and cooperation are of the essence. The statements above do not pertain to CARDET and the German Embassy Nicosia. As a scientific organisation, CARDET is generally not regarded on the same level as the other organisations interviewed. The German Embassy representing German politics plays only a marginal role in the field of asylum-related issues in Cyprus.

KISA and FWC can be regarded as important actors because they have many cooperation partners working on both a national and an international level. Therefore, they have an important position in the Cypriot organisation network in the field of asylum-related issues.

The network in Cyprus consists mainly of project-based collaboration, thus allowing it to adapt quickly to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Every organisation can provide its unique and specialised services within this field (German Embassy 2016). Furthermore, the Cypriot asylum-related organisations have developed a system of “burden-sharing” regarding their expertise and focus of work, whereby tasks and functions are distributed among the relevant organisations. “*We have the network that we need. Someone always knows someone when they need help or if help is needed*” (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016).

5.2 The Organisations’ Roles in the Reception and Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Cyprus and Europe

Our focus will now turn to the role that these organisations play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. In the following section, the interviewed organisations, along with their projects and tasks,

will be outlined. In addition, we will present the interviewees' opinions concerning the Cypriot asylum system and the role organisations play in this system, as well as the challenges they face.

a) The *Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (CARDET)* is a project-based Cypriot NGO. Sotiris Themistokleous explains that its primary sectors are social justice, integration and education. CARDET assists Cypriot grassroots organisations by providing support, expertise and funding. Trainings, online tools, created networks and alliances are also currently offered. The tools developed (e.g. computer software) will be sent to other organisations throughout Europe via the Internet. CARDET sees itself as a platform that creates and distributes information and the results of their research and work.

CARDET directly helps asylum seekers and refugees by offering psychological support, providing education and promoting integration. The focus of Cypriot organisations is not only on the integration of refugees but also and even more so on providing legal assistance to asylum seekers who do not want to stay in Cyprus. This is possibly because each organisation working in this field has developed networks with other organisations throughout Europe. Themistokleous further believes that these organisations have contributed considerably to public awareness of refugee-related issues. Unfortunately, organisations face severe challenges in order to improve their work and the situation for asylum seekers and refugees. In Cyprus "*decision making is centralised to the government*" (CARDET 2016). This significantly limits the organisations' influence on political decisions. Even though the government has made efforts to be more inclusive, CARDET complains that there is actually no place in the political decision-making process for its type of organisation and others like it (CARDET 2016). Themistokleous believes that there is a need for collaboration between civil society and public services: the two groups have different priorities that need to be harmonised and reconnected. CARDET and other Cypriot NGOs focus on social progress, social justice and social inclusion, whereas the Cypriot ministries want to promote state policies and try to protect the state and themselves as public servants. Organisations such as CARDET could even help the ministries open doors for European funds (CARDET 2016).

b) The NGO *Hope for Children* focuses on the protection and care of unaccompanied minors. They offer legal support and health care, provide education and help with the integration of these minors. Hope for Children

opened their shelter for unaccompanied minors in 2014, follows the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) and “*subscribes to the framework of the UN*” (Hope for Children 2016). Interviewee Vaggelis Gettos, Policy and Advocacy Officer, states that Hope for Children provides training and courses for the minors to establish skills needed to “*survive alone*” (Hope for Children 2016). This includes English lessons, other language courses and the minors’ enrolment in a local Cypriot school. The minors’ stay at the shelter ends when they reach the age of 18 or after they complete their schooling, but Hope for Children assists them in either finding work or applying for college. Monitoring continues even after the minors have left the shelter.

Hope for Children sets a good example for other organisations and other countries, especially regarding work with unaccompanied minors. Similar organisations that have coordinated many EU projects are slowly starting to play a more active role in intervening on the EU level. Unaccompanied minors are being referred to Hope for Children upon their arrival. Hope for Children has the leading role regarding unaccompanied minors.

Because the number of asylum seekers is limited to just a few hundred, Gettos does not regard the situation in Cyprus as problematic. Hope for Children believes that the country has one of the best asylum systems in Europe, because “*no one lives on the streets, everyone has shelter, a bed to sleep on, a plate of food to eat, the right to education*” (Hope for Children 2016). They describe the Cypriot government as well structured and responding well to humanitarian and social needs.

c) The Cypriot NGO *Cyprus Stop Trafficking* supports victims of both sex and labour trafficking. The organisation offers accommodation and housing to victims of trafficking. Interviewee Catherine Germain, a volunteer with Cyprus Stop Trafficking, describes it as an organisation that is “*on the field working with people*” in order to provide “*everyday life training*” (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016). Germain criticises the Cypriot asylum system, mainly for the long waiting period from the application and interview to a decision, and sees an urgent need for improvement in that area. Germain urges the Cypriot government to change the system so that it aligns with EU standards and makes life easier and more acceptable for the asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016).

Cyprus Stop Trafficking is only marginally involved in the asylum system in Cyprus. Because it deals with victims of trafficking and does not see a “*relation between the refugee crisis and trafficking in Cyprus*”

(Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016), the group does not play a prominent role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus. However, it helps with the integration of victims of trafficking – people who might want to apply for asylum in Cyprus.

d) The *German Embassy Nicosia*, the official representative of the German government in Cyprus, works in the political, legal and cultural sectors. Peter Neven, Deputy Head of Mission in Nicosia, explains that the German Embassy is only marginally involved in the asylum situation in Cyprus. For example, it supported and financed a project led by the FWC from August 2014 through December 2015 (German Embassy 2016), the aim of which was to provide support to asylum seekers in Nicosia. Although the German Embassy mainly sponsored and monitored the project, FWC was the active partner working in the field, visiting the reception centre in Kofinou and conducting interviews with people seeking protection.

Neven explains that the Cypriot asylum services are fairly new as they have only started operating in 2004. Still, the asylum process has improved greatly and has significantly sped up. He sees that “*services are much more professional now*” (The German Embassy 2016).

e) *Caritas Cyprus* is the national branch of the international NGO Caritas. Caritas aims to help people in need in order to preserve and restore human dignity and rights. Interviewee Gosia Chrysanthou explains that Caritas helps with medical needs, accommodation, and food and assists with documents asylum applications and administrative questions (Caritas Cyprus 2016).

NGOs such as Caritas fill a gap when there are one or two weeks between official registration with the Asylum Service and reception at Kofinou. Caritas plays an important role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus, especially because the Cypriot government itself does not have an integration plan. Language barriers and discrimination threaten and even prevent integration, Chrysanthou explains. Nevertheless, she approvingly recognises that the Cypriot government was able to build a camp very quickly after the first boat with asylum seekers arrived, but at present this has had a positive effect only for those arriving in groups, not individuals. “*We can leave ten people in the streets and nobody will notice, but we cannot leave 350 in the streets and nobody notice*”, Chrysanthou then adds and says that “*it seems like the government wants to look good to show [they] are doing the job when the crisis is visible, but when it’s not [visible] there is very little care and very*

little support for asylum seekers” (Caritas 2016). However, she has noticed that the government has become more open to accepting the help of NGOs, which is new in Cyprus. “*People trust us more than they trust authorities, so we are a good bridge between the authorities and people*”, Chrysanthou explains. Caritas has good relationships with some individuals from state authorities but not with the government as a whole. She sees an urgent need for cooperation between NGOs and the Cypriot authorities in order to improve the situation in Cyprus (Caritas 2016).

f) The *Future Worlds Center (FWC)* is an NGO operating on the national level. It has many projects, its main one being “Strengthening Asylum”, funded by the UNHCR. In January 2016, the project “Improving the Situation of Asylum Seekers in Cyprus”, which was funded by the German Embassy, was completed. Another relevant project is “Alternatives to Detention”, which studies practical alternatives to the detainment of migrants. Interviewee Constantinos Constantinou, a researcher for FWC, explains that its proposed alternatives are pitched to the government to be implemented. FWC also organises language classes, which are held at their offices, but resources are limited, so they must rely on volunteer teachers and cannot guarantee a permanent education system. In addition, there is the “Unit of Rehabilitation for Victims of Torture”, which specialises in the care of people who have been subjected to torture. FWC also prepares the AIDA country report for Cyprus, a scientific report that many researchers, including those of the MAREM project, work with and benefit from.

FWC is the implementing partner of UNHCR in Cyprus. When new asylum seekers arrive, FWC goes to the site with a team of lawyers, psychologists and social workers to provide support. They also visit Kofinou regularly. In 2015, when Kofinou management was in the process of being formed, Cypriot authorities asked UNHCR to take control of Kofinou to a certain degree. FWC helped with medical and social care, organising donations, and so on. The situation described above proves that NGOs step in when the Cypriot government cannot provide for the needs of asylum seekers. However, cooperation between NGOs and the government is not constant. In the past few years, not much has changed on a legal level, but on a social level they have seen an increasing awareness of asylum-related issues and have even received various donations and voluntary assistance, Constantinou says. More people are active and have expressed a desire to help, and this increase is quite visible. He believes that this change is due

mostly to the huge influx of asylum seekers and refugees and to publicity in combination with the work of NGOs (Future Worlds Center 2016).

This overview of the work and services these organisations provide shows that the majority of them work hands-on with the asylum seekers and refugees on a daily basis, whereas the German Embassy and CARDET have taken a more indirect approach, assisting with reports and projects, linking other organisations together and providing support for grassroots organisations. In general, every organisation commented on the overall attitude of the Cypriot government and pointed out that asylum procedures have improved, but there are still issues that need attention, such as the large percentage of asylum applicants who receive subsidiary protection, problems related to integration, the lack of resources and the financial difficulties faced by NGOs. The organisations are also concerned that the Cypriot government continues to work with and approach the EU yet remains distant from its own national and local organisations that provide crucial assistance to the arrivals. As stated by the interviewed organisations, there is a gap in the Cypriot government between talk and action, and NGOs must fill this gap through their work. The government does not appreciate the work of the NGOs (Caritas 2016) or allows them to be part of the decision-making process, even though, in the end, the welfare of the asylum seekers and refugees depends on these NGOs.

5.3 The European Level: Europe, CEAS and EASO

After giving their views on the role that asylum-related organisations play in Cyprus, the interviewees from the six organisations were asked about the European situation: What was their opinion on the asylum situation in Europe? Has the implementation of CEAS and institutions such as EASO affected and/or changed their work? Their answers to these questions will be presented in the following section.

a) Sotiris Themistokleous from CARDET states that the problem faced in Europe is a psychological one. *“We do have the capacities and the resources [to handle the refugee crisis], but still we exaggerate and say we can’t host any more refugees”* (CARDET 2016). He sees a problem in the insecurity that has been transmitted among the people and claims that problem solving *“is not a matter of money but a matter of social pressure”* (CARDET 2016). The implementation of CEAS *“has not affected the work as such, but it has affected the content of the work.”* CEAS has not

changed the philosophical background or the working practices, but it has affected scientific content to a degree, because scientific work has to align with European standards. With regard to the hypotheses on mimetic isomorphism, this statement is very interesting because it shows that there are homogenisation tendencies that affect organisations on the European level. However, standardisation has been taken too far in some aspects, says Themistokleous; the newly merged European fund for “asylum, migration and integration”, which previously consisted of three separate funds, can be regarded as problematic. There is a major social and political debate concerning whether the three groups – asylum seekers, migrants and refugees – have the same needs and whether they should be treated equally. Themistokleous finds this a very conservative approach and reproaches the EU for neglecting the special needs of each group and violating their rights. Nevertheless, Themistokleous believes that a collective approach is generally good, considering that there is more power behind decisions if countries stand together, and it is good for practitioners because they can learn from one another. *“But the challenge of the system is that it is imbalanced and not able to deal with specific problems in each country”*, he warns, emphasising that the European countries do not in fact have the same problems. *“The main challenge for the system is to come up with collective answers for specialised problems. The problem is not common, there is no common problem.”* For example, compared with Greece, Cyprus has not received a large number of asylum seekers. *“We set up a common policy, but I would prefer a common philosophy”*, Themistokleous says (CARDET 2016).

b) Being the implementing partner of UNHCR in Cyprus, Hope for Children is obliged to follow CEAS directives and norms, explains Vaggelis Gettos. However, EASO and its Special Support Plan for Cyprus, which was in effect from June 2014 until February 2016 (EASO 2014), have not influenced Hope for Children and its work in any way. This shows that the attempt to achieve homogenisation among all the organisations in Europe from above is not very successful. From Gettos’ point of view, Europe is currently experiencing a procedural breakdown within the asylum system. Europe was not prepared to receive such a large number of asylum seekers and let the system reach its limits, thus creating an enormous crisis. According to Gettos, the most severe violation facing human rights, on both a legal and a humanitarian level, is the closing of borders, as is currently the case in Macedonia and Greece. *“If this is generalised, we are over”*, he warns (Hope for Children 2016).

c) Cyprus Stop Trafficking operates mainly on a national level, but it does try to establish a network on a broader level in order to attend international seminars for training purposes and to collaborate with other EU countries regarding trafficking. Catherine Germain commented that although it is easier to contact European organisations, it is more difficult to contact organisations in Africa, where most trafficking victims originate. In her opinion, the EU is on its way to handling the situation, but much more still needs to be done. An *“amazing organisation is needed to meet the needs of refugees”* in European countries, she states (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016).

d) While none of the interviewed organisations seemed to know a lot about EASO and its Special Support Plan for Cyprus, Peter Neven from the German Embassy was deeply informed. He explains that the cooperation agreement with EASO was signed in order to transfer expertise more openly throughout Europe. EASO mainly provides technical assistance to Cypriot state authorities, such as the Asylum Service. It makes visits, holds seminars and conducts expert discussions. Overall, the implementation of CEAS has been quite beneficial for Cyprus, states Neven. Even more so, he adds that the EU and CEAS are now able to benefit from Cyprus: *“Things that were criticised two years ago are now being used as a model in the EU’s asylum policy”* (German Embassy 2016).

e) Gosia Chrysanthou from Caritas Cyprus criticises the Cypriot asylum system, saying that in comparison with other EU countries, Cyprus does not do a good job of handling asylum requests. Caritas had a case in which two asylum seekers who were rejected by the Cypriot government were recognised by Belgium and Sweden. In her opinion, the asylum system should be more standardised. However, she is aware of the challenges being faced: countries such as Greece are unable, under every circumstance, to deal with the huge influx of people seeking protection on their own. Like many other countries, Greece has limited resources and simply cannot cope with the problems it must face. On the other hand, Chrysanthou observes a problem with burden-sharing in general. Certain countries, including Germany and Sweden, are more attractive to asylum seekers based on favourable economic factors and the generally better quality of life; therefore, these countries receive more applicants despite their insufficient capacities and resources. Cyprus has the capacity to host more asylum seekers and refugees, but very few actually go to Cyprus (Caritas 2016).

f) Constantinos Constantinou from FWC welcomes the approach to standardise the asylum system, implement a common policy and expand

networks. CEAS makes the work of organisations such as FWC easier, especially in dealing with certain cases, because it is able to follow common guidelines. In the past year, FWC established a closer relationship with international organisations. According to Constantinou, interest in contacting other EU organisations has grown, not only in Cyprus but also in other European countries. Still, he sees a need to improve CEAS. In addition, he believes the Dublin Regulation to be particularly problematic because it shifts the weight of the refugee crisis to peripheral countries on the Mediterranean, such as Greece or Italy. The EU seems to continue shifting this weight, because *“it’s convenient to the rest of the countries”*, he explains. The system has to be a common one, but it does not need to be homogenised. Each country has its own unique needs, implying the need for a firm yet still flexible system (Future Worlds Center 2016).

One can see that with the establishment of CEAS, efforts were made to standardise not only the national asylum systems but also the work of the organisations in the asylum-related sector, which could lead to isomorphic processes. The interviewed organisations have realised certain changes, but they regard the implementation of CEAS as incomplete and insufficient. Given that different EU countries interpret the guidelines of CEAS differently, the asylum systems have in fact not been standardised, or have been standardised only to a certain extent.

6. Conclusion

When we looked at the role of organisations in Cyprus, it became obvious that NGOs try to fill the gap left by the government and to play a major role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The Cypriot NGOs are very well connected in places where they try to distribute their tasks because, unlike the government, they work directly with asylum seekers and refugees in the field, so there is a need for more cooperation between civil society and government. Although the asylum system itself has improved in recent years, there are problems with integrating asylum seekers and refugees into the workforce and society. More needs to be done in terms of providing opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to take up suitable work and attend language and cultural courses. Moreover, Cypriot citizens must be made more aware of the presence of asylum seekers and refugees so they can assist the government and organisations regarding the issue of integration.

With respect to the European level, one can see that since Cyprus gained control of its asylum system after joining the EU in 2004, the system now aligns with European standards and has improved significantly as a result of EU influence. Overall, the Cypriot organisations consider a common approach to be generally good but believe improvements are still needed within CEAS, because the current system does not meet the desired requirements and needs of each individual country. Cypriot organisations would also like to have greater influence on a European level so that the voices of small countries such as Cyprus can be acknowledged. Governmental changes in Cyprus, such as the implementation of CEAS, did result in some improvements, but overall, they did not influence the situation in Cyprus significantly. Organisations had anticipated changes on a political level, thus facilitating the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees and a trickling down to the societal level. With the situation now confronting Cyprus and the rest of Europe, these changes have yet to occur. Asylum-related organisations have provided details as to why a gap between talk and action exists and endeavour to influence the government at different levels regarding this situation. In keeping with the interviewees' opinions, the European Asylum System is slowly developing on a European level, but signs of it working in Cyprus on an organisational level remain to be seen. Moreover, the talk-and-action gap between the government and these organisations is slowly closing, and more needs to be done in terms of encouraging the government to work with the grassroots organisations that actually work with and assist asylum seekers and refugees.

In addition, most of the networks in Cyprus are nationally based. The lack of resources and Cyprus' geographical location have stifled their growth, but the situation for asylum seekers and refugees could be improved if each organisation's network would reach a European level or even an international level, expanding to North Africa and the Middle East, regions that were home to the majority of asylum seekers and refugees. Despite not having a large network, all the organisations provide whatever services or advice they can to those who need it.

Considering again DiMaggio and Powell's theory of neo-institutionalism, one can identify specialised occurrences within the asylum-related field in Cyprus. In general, the organisations interviewed orientate themselves towards the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. During the MAREM interviews, various organisations frequently mentioned that the asylum system functions based on a division of work, or burden-sharing.

Because the government is not directly involved with asylum seekers and refugees, organisations use this burden-sharing method to fill the gap between government action and the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Each asylum-related organisation in Cyprus specialises in a certain area of work and delegates' tasks and assignments to others depending on what needs to be achieved. According to the interviewed organisations, this results in an exchange of knowledge and the provision of the best service possible to those in need. Recognising that this method is not a standard form of isomorphism, one still sees it as an adaptation in response to uncertainties. It is also clear that between some organisations, especially those that are similar in structure and are driven by the same norms, a certain level of interdependency has been established. This has resulted from a functional division of labour through specialisation in different areas of work and the fact that none of the organisations has the capacity to offer all the services needed.

Lastly, this examination of the organisations' networks assists us in understanding the current asylum situation not only in Cyprus, but in the rest of Europe as well. More research needs to be conducted in this area to find a solution to the gap between talk and action and other issues concerning the integration of asylum seekers and refugees fleeing to Europe.

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Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically

Caritas Cyprus

Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology
Cyprus Stop Trafficking

Future Worlds Center

German Embassy

Hope For Children

Greece Report

Tobias Breuckmann, Thomas Hoppe, Melisa Lehmann, Jakob Reckers

1. Introduction

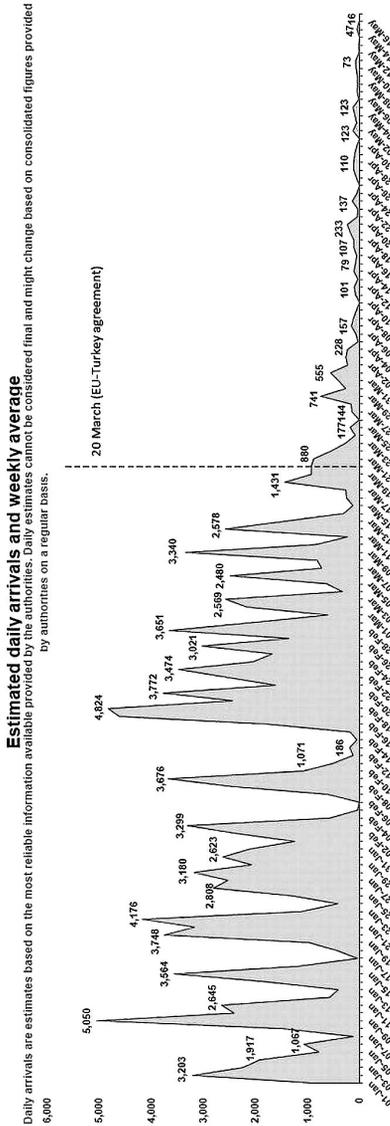
Being situated so close to the recent uprisings and war zones in the Middle East, Greece has become the main gate to Europe for more than a million asylum seekers (Kalpouzos and Mann 2015: 3; UNHCR 2015: 1). Meanwhile, the country itself, which covers an area of 131,957 km² and has a population of 11,5 million, continues to suffer from its 2008 financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession (Statista 2016a; Statista 2016b). Population density in Greece was last measured at 84 people per km² in 2014, according to the World Bank (The World Bank 2016).

From 2008 to July 2016, the unemployment rate rose from 7.8 % to 23.5 % (OECD 2016: 1; Statista 2016c), while this rate for Greece's youth from 2008 to 2015 more than doubled, from 21 % to 50 % (European Parliament 2015: 2). The Gross Domestic Product per capita in Greece was last recorded at 18,064 US dollars in 2015 (Statista 2016d). Since 2010, if not earlier, when the economic crisis in southern Europe was becoming particularly severe, Greece has been considered the weakest link in terms of managing European refugees (Triandafyllidou 2014: 410). Initially, the media spotlight was focused on Italy and Spain with regard to asylum politics in Europe, but public interest in Greece grew apace, and once again, Greece was regarded as a problem area, with migrants from the Middle East attempting to enter Europe uncontrolled and in unlimited numbers (Cabot 2014: 29).

The year 2015 witnessed the largest flow of people seeking protection in Greece, mostly via the Aegean Sea to the Greek islands closest to Turkey. In total, 862,138 persons attempted to enter Greece, 856,723 arriving by boat, and an unknown number of people died during the crossing (Rygiel 2016: 546). During 2015, the asylum situation changed several times. In the summer months, many people seeking protection decided to disembark from Turkey to cross the relatively quiet sea to Greece. Because Greece has several islands near the Turkish border and is a member of the European Union (EU) since 1981, it is a popular choice for people

seeking protection. However, Greece is not generally seen as their final destination, because it lacks an asylum system and thus the living conditions for asylum seekers and refugees are less than ideal. Instead, Greece tends to serve as a country of transit for those who wish to apply for asylum in other EU states such as Germany or Sweden (Banulescu-Bogdan and Fratzke 2015: 1).

Figure 1: Daily arrivals in Greece between January and early June 2016



Source: UNHCR (2016: 1).

By the end of 2015, many European countries had closed their borders to refugees, thus ruling out the so-called Balkan route as an option for people

seeking asylum in the EU. An estimated 50,000 people were thus left stranded in Greece, where huge detention camps emerged in Piraeus (the port of Athens) or on a grassland plain in Idomeni, near the border of Macedonia (Amnesty International 2016: 1).

In March 2016, the EU and Turkey signed an agreement stating that all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands should be sent back to Turkey, and for every Syrian who returned to Turkey from these islands, another Syrian would be resettled in the EU (European Commission 2016: 1). This led to a considerable decrease in the number of daily arrivals in Greece (Figure 1). By October 2016, a total of 169,495 arrivals had already been registered. Their main countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (UNHCR 2016: 1; Eurostat 2016a). In the first half of 2016 17,205 people have applied for asylum in Greece, which is 148 asylum seekers per 1,000 of population (Eurostat 2016b; Eurostat 2016c).

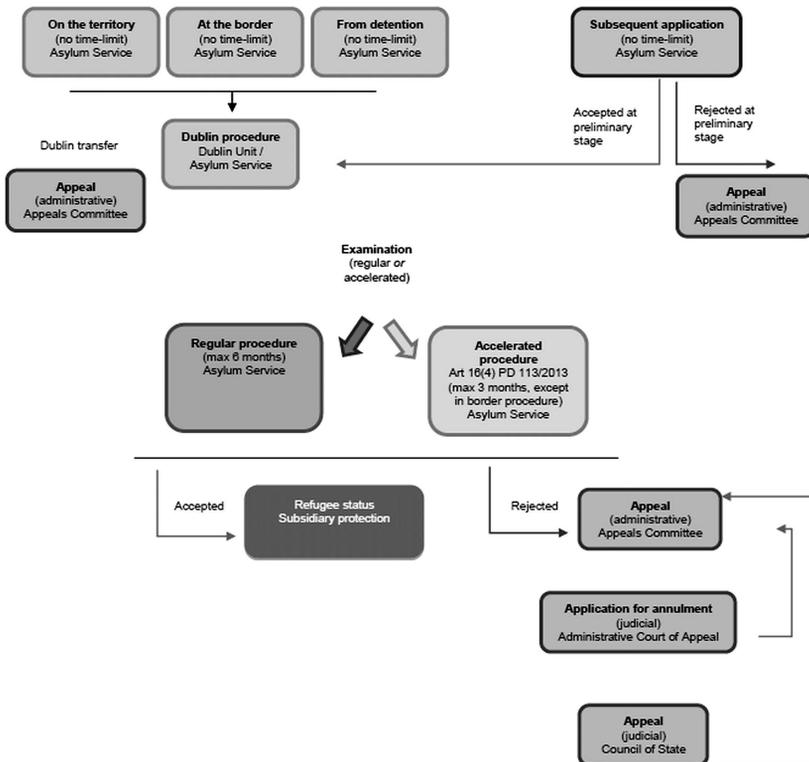
Given the recent conflicts in this region, asylum applications are expected to increase in number, and Greece's immigration policy is likely to play an important role in the future. Since 2004, Greece has had one of the largest numbers of asylum seekers in Europe but also one of the lowest recognition rates (Cabot 2014: 4). In addition to its precarious economic situation, the deplorable state of its asylum system and its low acceptance rates, Greece has been excluded as a desirable country of destination, leading many undocumented asylum seekers to flee to other EU countries. The large number of rejections is problematic, but an even bigger problem is the large number of pending requests for asylum due to the country's "in-capacity to document, register and process" the applications (Cabot 2014: 4). The crisis in Greece is having a deleterious effect on these procedures and on the social integration of refugees (Cabot 2014: 10). For example, there have been reports that both Greek officials and the European border control officers from Frontex have perpetrated human rights violations against asylum seekers and refugees in detention camps (Human Rights Watch 2011: 1).

In 2013, a new asylum procedure was instituted that enhanced the transparency and efficiency of the process in the first instance and transferred responsibilities to an independent council (Figure 2). The Asylum Service, or First Reception Service, accelerated the asylum procedure, and an Appeals Committee was created. Before this, the police had been responsible for the asylum process (AIDA 2015: 19). Figure 3 shows the increase of positive first-instance decisions since this change in the asylum procedure.

Still, by 2015, the recognition rate was still low (36% of 13,205 asylum applications) when compared with the rates in other European states, such as Germany (over 55%), Denmark (about 62%) and Bulgaria (76%) (Eurostat 2016d: 1).

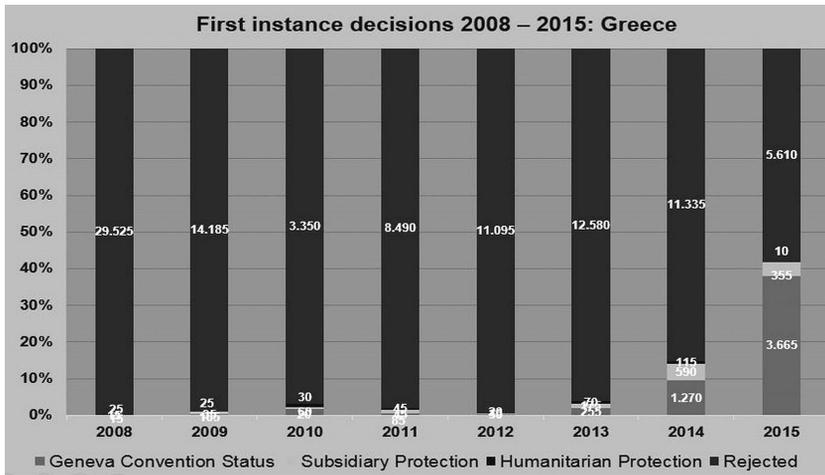
In the first half of 2016 only 21 % of applications were recognised (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). In the same period of time, subsidiary protection was given to 3 % of applicants (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). In the first half of 2016 4,520 asylum decisions were recorded in Greece in total, the absolute majority (3,555) of them were rejected ones (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). The refugee rate in Greece amounted to 18 % in the first half of 2016 (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e).

Figure 2: New procedure of the Greek asylum system, begun in 2013



Source: AIDA (2015: 18).

Figure 3: First-instance decisions between 2008 and 2015 in the Greek asylum system



Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2016).

In January 2015, Greek voters elected a new government under the leadership of the left-wing party Syriza. In one of its first announcements, on 17 February 2015, Syriza declared their intention to improve the asylum system, especially the situation concerning the detention of asylum seekers. According to its plan, detention in general should be limited to six months and alternatives to detention should be established with the aim of closing the detention camps entirely. In addition, the new Ministry of Migration created a new policy. However, owing to financial restrictions, the Greek government continues to lack resources and is therefore incapable of providing better conditions for asylum seekers and refugees (AIDA 2015b: 1). This change in the government greatly influenced the migration situation in Greece, as did the enormous increase in the number of asylum seekers (UNHCR 2016b: 1) and the dynamic asylum-related conditions overall (e.g. the EU–Turkey deal and the closing of the Balkan route).

Events and conditions such as these raise the following questions: how is the constantly changing asylum situation in Greece being handled, and how are the networks and the work of refugee-related NGOs developing? These two questions are the main focus of this chapter. We begin with an overview of the current state of the research regarding the asylum situation

in Greece, which is followed by an examination of the relevant hypotheses and a discussion of the results of the MAREM project.¹

2. *Current State of Research*

Asylum seekers in Greece face many challenges, such as difficulties in finding accommodations and social support, as well as the many obstacles posed by the application process (Cabot 2014: 23). The lack of bureaucratic capacities combined with the effects of the global financial crisis and the position of Greece as a border state have exacerbated the social and legal situation of asylum seekers. In addition, the problematic conditions in Greece overall have led to the marginalisation and impoverishment of certain population groups, which has had an effect on the social and ethical dynamics involved in their coexistence with asylum seekers and refugees (Cabot 2014: 6).

Another consequence of the crisis has been the emergence of many nationalist and racist ideologies, especially in Athens, which in turn have strongly influenced Greece's social life, political climate and asylum procedures (Cabot 2014: 18). Mogiani (2016) views these overall societal tendencies in relation to the more expeditious processing of Syrian asylum seekers: "*Since December 2014, Syrians have been able to benefit from a fast-track examination procedure that lets them have an answer within the same day. Unsurprisingly, this generates resentment among those seeking asylum*" (Mogiani 2016: 51).

Innes (2016) has also reported on the dramatic living conditions of asylum seekers with respect to the asylum system and the changing political climate: "*In Athens the signs of international migration are visible. Migrant bodies along with homelessness and drug use are evident on the streets. Gang violence towards migrants and police brutality towards migrants, particularly black Africans, have been well documented by the Greek and the international media*" (Innes 2016: 2).

Political decisions made at the European level in 2016 regarding the complex of asylum issues have trapped more than 50,000 people who are seeking protection in Greece. Most of these people are women and children who are not allowed to move until their asylum applications have

1 For a general description of the MAREM project, see the first chapter of this book.

been approved by the Greek Asylum Service. Upon their arrival, asylum applicants must prove that they either were or would be persecuted in their country of origin. In this context, Turkey, which the EU considers to be a “safe third country”, becomes a collection point for people with rejected asylum applications (Magaronis 2016: 24).

The conditions in the ‘hotspots’, which are the first reception centres for managing the exceptional migratory flow with the help of the EU, have become increasingly unstable, and the accommodations have turned into detention camps for people seeking protection. The military is unable to provide enough food for the inhabitants, and the camps have reached their full capacity and lack sanitary facilities. Moreover, the behaviour of the inhabitants is becoming more aggressive and violent (Magaronis 2016: 25).

Generally speaking, the influence of the EU on the national asylum systems in Europe is growing because of the so-called refugee crisis.² This becomes especially evident when one considers the recent events in Greece. Currently, there is no research-based evaluation to determine the influence of asylum-related organisations and their networks on the asylum system in Greece. In addition, changes in the Greek government, in politics and in the seasons influence whether people seeking protection will cross the Mediterranean and the Aegean Seas. The research questions to be explored in the part of the MAREM project concentrating on Greece are designed to close this research gap by focusing on the role that networks of asylum- and refugee-related organisations play in the Greek asylum system. These questions are as follows:

- *What role do these networks play in processes of reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees?*
- *To what extent is the mutual cooperation of the asylum-related organisations important to their formal structure and their work?*
- *What role do these cooperation networks play for the national and European asylum systems?*

Taking into account the rising number of asylum seekers and refugees and the recent governmental changes, does cooperation among the NGOs

2 In our perspective, the term ‘refugee crisis’ is problematic because it focuses on the people seeking protection as the source of the on-going humanitarian crisis instead of including the European asylum system that is denying them legal access to the EU.

themselves and between the NGOs and the government have an influence on the refugees' situation?

3. Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical background of neo-institutionalism³ (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), several assumptions can be made that will be examined later in the Results section. For our study, we formulated the following four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: NGOs with similar aims and similar financial sources follow a certain discourse to survive.

Based on the theoretical considerations in this study, the NGOs should exhibit a certain degree of *coercive* isomorphism (for further information on this term, please see the first chapter of this book). Because these organisations depend on donors to fund their projects and their work, they may be compelled to meet their donors' expectations. This pressure could influence the formal structures of the asylum-related organisations.

Hypothesis 2: The changing political situation in Greece and the growing number of people seeking protection there lead to a discursive and institutional change that creates new cooperation networks and reflects isomorphic processes.

Focusing on the governmental change in Greece, one would expect a change of paradigms through Syriza. This may influence the structure of organisations should the Greek state intervene in the legal realm of the organisational networks and be unable to provide appropriate funding owing mainly to the country's financial problems.

Hypothesis 3: When new NGOs emerge, they tend to orientate themselves towards the practices of established organisations.

More international NGOs are expected to work in Greece in response to the political change, the rising number of asylum seekers and refugees, and the recent changes in intergovernmental relations (e.g. the EU–Turkey deal and closing of the Balkan route). In addition, new NGOs will emerge that hope to receive funding and therefore aim to become more established

3 Neo-institutionalism is the theoretical basis of the research project presented here and is explained in the first chapter of this book.

and adjust to the new political party's paradigms. Therefore, *mimetic isomorphism* (for further information on this term, please see the first chapter of this book) may be observable.

Hypothesis 4: There is a gap between talk and action owing to the paradigmatic changes in the longstanding organisations.

Regarding the highly dynamic situation in Greece and the resulting networks and interdependencies, the organisations in the field must adapt and respond to all these changes. NGOs that were already established prior to the refugee crisis and governmental change may adhere to their usual practices but may change their formal structure and their official way of presenting themselves. Therefore, a gap between talk and action may be identifiable.

4. Data

The main emphasis of the questionnaire for this study was on revealing the dynamics of the organisational networks and to make a connection between these networks and the theory of neo-institutionalism and the concept of isomorphism. We also wanted to identify changes in the cooperation networks and isomorphic processes over the past few years. To show their development, we interviewed some organisations more than once during the three MAREM rounds (2014–2016).

The seven NGOs interviewed in 2016 were Aitima, Amnesty International Greece, Antigone, Caritas Athens, Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF), the Greek Forum of Refugees and PRAKSIS. The two scientific organisations interviewed were research institutes situated in Athens: the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) and the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). The political party interviewed was Syriza, the left-wing governmental party, which in 2015 formed a coalition with the right-wing party Independent Greeks (Smith 2015: 1). The NGOs Aitima and Amnesty International were examined three times, while the NGOs Antigone and MSF were interviewed twice.

The interviewed organisations work mainly on the national level, and most of them maintain offices in Athens and Thessaloniki (the second largest city in Greece). Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, many NGOs also operate on the Aegean islands and in the border regions, be-

cause these are the main routes travelled to reach Europe and are close to the (now closed) borders of the Balkan states. Two of the NGOs, PRAKSIS and Caritas Athens, are active at the local level in Athens and in the Attica region (PRAKSIS also in Thessaloniki). Caritas Athens is part of and works closely with the global Caritas umbrella organisation on the national, European and international levels. Two of the larger and more well-established NGOs – Amnesty International and MSF – work internationally.

The funding sources of the organisations vary. The three main sources include private donations; financial support provided by larger, more established NGOs through projects; and funding by the state or the EU.

Table 1: Interviewed organisations and their main characteristics

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms	Main issues
AITIMA	Local	NGO	Human Rights	Asylum seekers and Refugees
MSF	International	NGO	Human Rights	Emergency supply
Praksis	National	NGO	Human Rights	Asylum seekers and Refugees, Children, HIV awareness etc.
Amnesty International	International	NGO	Human Rights	International Law, Campaigns
AntiGone	National	NGO	Human Rights	Reports
EKKE	National	Scientific Organisation	Objectivity	Social research, Expertise, Reports
Greek Forum for Refugees	National	NGO	Human Rights	Asylum seekers and Refugees
Caritas Athens	Local	NGO	Religious	Refugees, Migrants
SYRIZA	National	Political Party	Social justice, Political	Administration, Legislation
ELIAMEP	National	Scientific Organisation	Objectivity	Research, Expertise

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

The main driving norms and values of the NGOs are the human rights and humanitarianism. The predominant value for the two research institutes (EKKE and ELIAMEP) is objectivity, and Syriza aims for social justice. The main target groups of NGOs that work in the field are migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as Greeks who are in a weak socio-economic position. Most of the organisations cover a wide range of issues (see PRAKSIS), or they specialise in providing help to asylum seekers and

refugees (see Aitima). Table 1 summarises the main characteristics of the interviewed organisations.

The MAREM research trip to Athens in March 2016 lasted two weeks. During the first week some time was spent in the field visiting selected places and observing the asylum situation in relevant locations, such as the integration of refugees and the number of asylum seekers. The research group visited the refugee camp in Piraeus, located near the port of Athens, where asylum seekers and refugees coming from the Aegean islands are housed in tents or warehouses from the moment they arrive on the Greek mainland. We also visited a soup kitchen managed by Caritas and a squatter building in the university district of Exarcheia, where local citizens independently created a place for asylum seekers and refugees to sleep and eat. These short field studies provided insights into the reality and everyday life of the asylum seekers and refugees and into the work of the volunteers who were helping them. This in turn helped us obtain a firm basis for interpreting the surrounding social environment. By being in direct contact with volunteers and organisational members and meeting them in their field of work, we were better able to analyse the data collected from the interviews and documents. Still, critical reflection on experiences in the field is necessary (Mattisek et al. 2013: 149), and the researchers must be as objective as possible.

In the following section, we present the main results of the research carried out in Greece in 2016, as well as the findings of the network analysis.

5. Results

5.1 Networks

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, various aspects of the cooperation network of Greek asylum-related organisations have changed significantly. A small network of organisations supporting asylum seekers and refugees had already existed before the crisis, and as stated by Aitima, these organisations relied mostly on an exchange of information at the local level in Athens (Aitima 2016). People who work in these organisations know one another personally, as illustrated by this quote from Amnesty International: *“Before this crisis [there] were not so many people working on these things. Everybody knew each other. We were in kind of the same*

village” (Amnesty International 2016). Generally speaking, the network continues to grow and become more international.

Currently, the organisations’ main activities continue to be in Athens and in the Attica region, but these sites now also include the Aegean islands and regions on the mainland, such as the border with the Republic of Macedonia, where many people seeking protection are stranded. With circumstantial changes in 2015/16, borders were closed and the EU–Turkey agreement took effect, obstructing the so-called Aegean route into Europe. The humanitarian crisis is now evident throughout Greece, and the organisations’ response is to seek support on a national and international level. In addition, the organisations are attempting to collaborate with partners that work on different levels (see Figure 5).

In response to the drastic increase in the number of asylum seekers who arrived in Greece during the summer of 2015, a majority of NGOs are becoming established there to provide basic services: *“At the beginning [there] were only three, four. It’s a huge rise – I mean, many, many people came to work, many organisations came to Greece [and] are now based in Greece, big organisations”* (Amnesty International 2016). Amnesty International stresses the positive impact of these newly settled NGOs on the Greek economy: *“There are many people who actually found work through these organisations. Accommodations in the islands were taken by people who live there now permanently to work on the ground”* (Amnesty International 2016). Just recently, the large NGO Oxfam International opened a base in Greece, and there are now many more actors within this particular organisational field.

In addition, new NGOs were created to assume special responsibilities, such as providing legal aid, and to fill in the gaps as other organisations become more specialised. Caritas Athens (2016) mentions this emergence: *“You know, with this humanitarian crisis, a lot of NGOs have appeared out of nowhere.”* Because of limited resources due to the financial crisis, the NGOs tend to concentrate on their own specific tasks and responsibilities, such as providing information, food, accommodations, language courses and medical or legal aid, and they direct asylum seekers and refugees to their cooperation partners for help depending on their particular needs. Thus, *“all serious NGOs network because you cannot cope with everything”* (Caritas Athens 2016). Moreover, the NGOs share a variety of resources, including knowledge, experience, staff and specialists. According to an interviewee from Amnesty International, *“[the NGOs] could use and do use all the financial support from big international organisati-*

ons who came here. That's why many partnerships are on-going these [many] months. That's great because one organisation has the knowledge of what's going on, the know-how about what's going on in Greece and how things are implemented and functioning, and the others have an international view of things; they can quickly mobilise things and recruit people and distribution and everything. So I believe that these two [groups] can click very well and have global solutions” (Amnesty International 2016).

Cooperation is regarded as essential for supporting asylum seekers and refugees because it gives them a stronger voice. Many organisations are able to address their problems and needs and to draw attention to asylum-related issues such as living conditions. According to PRAKSIS, *“It strengthens our work, I would say, and it gives a stronger voice to the people we are supporting, for sure, when you talk about joint positions and stating the needs, the critique, the gaps”* (PRAKSIS 2016).

For the purpose of research or publishing information and reports, collaboration with a variety of actors is crucial, as EKKE (2016) points out: *“because different actors have different views, [it is vital] to have the whole picture of the situation”*. However, there are hardly any ‘official’ cooperation contracts. Only a few networks that consist of NGOs exist, such as the Racist Violence Recording Network, which works directly in the field (e.g. in refugee camps). The Greek Forum of Refugees and Antigone sum it up in the following two statements respectively:

“Everyone has some problems, but the others don't know. There is no cooperation. So when I speak about these networks, they are on specific issues which concern every organisation, for example, recording racist violence” (Greek Forum of Refugees 2016).

“I think there is a small degree of cooperation. I don't think that there is, let's say, a round table of contact persons between the NGOs that coordinate officially. But in the field, there is de facto cooperation, let's say in a camp or in the reception centre or in a place that refugees come to. But there is no official cooperation” (Antigone 2016).

Amnesty International also emphasises this aspect of the relationship: *“We are having working groups. We are talking with each other for exchange of information, but it is not something official”* (Amnesty International 2016).

NGOs (see Figure 4): *“UNHCR is not really an NGO, it is [part of the] United Nations, so [it has] an institutional role to play in the whole system. So there’s institutional cooperation between the state and UNHCR, but according to other NGOs, [the UNHCR has] supported much of the whole process of reception and other basic needs of refugees and migrants”* (Antigone 2016).

The network visualisations of the types of organisations show that the dominant type of actor is the NGO, thus most of the organisations (28 out of a total of 43) are NGOs (see Figure 4). Some are important, nationally and internationally well-connected NGOs (see Figure 4), namely the Greek Forum of Refugees (GFR), the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), the Ecumenical Refugee Program (ERP), Caritas and PRAKSIS. All these NGOs were already working and actively networking prior to 2015 and can therefore benefit from an existing and established network. Only these important and well-established NGOs have a large number of cooperation partners, including the UNHCR, and also cooperate with executive or governmental organisations. PRAKSIS is the only one of the interviewed actors in Greece that reportedly has a partnership with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) (see Figure 4). More information about EASO as a key actor in asylum-related work can be found in the chapter devoted to this particular subject.

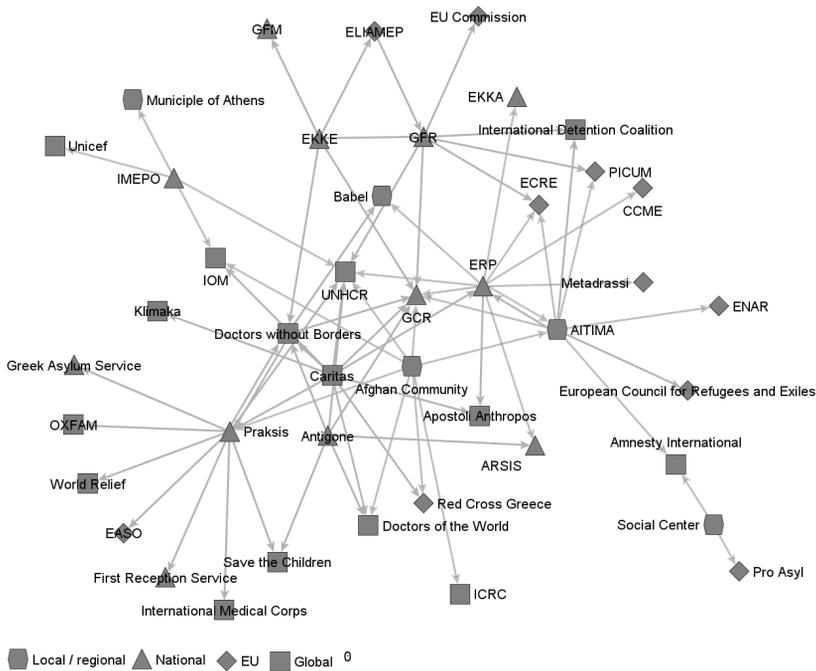
In general, the number of executive organisations and political or government-related actors involved in the Greek network of asylum-related organisations, as reconstructed by our research team, is limited (see Figure 4). Since the change of government in 2015, the state has been more receptive to the idea of cooperation. Two of the organisations confirm this view: *“The government itself was more open to work with not Greek sectors but with private sectors or NGOs and improve things this way”* (Amnesty International 2016). *“This is very important, because this is a real change in the government’s attitude. This is a real change, because it is an attitude which is a humanitarian attitude and a positive approach – and not a scapegoating negative approach [as] before”* (Aitima 2016).

Also rare in the networks of the organisations we interviewed are scientific organisations (see Figure 4), because they only monitor the situation and do not actively work with asylum seekers and refugees. The only scientific bodies identified from the examined networks are EKKE and ELIAMEP. Their cooperation is mainly limited to the exchange of information (EKKE 2016). Three of the organisations cannot be clearly classified as one of the actor types (see Figure 4).

The number of cooperation partners differs from organisation to organisation. The range of cooperation partners shown in the visualisation includes IMEPO with its four ties and PRAKSIS with its ten cooperation partners named from the perspective of the organisation (see Figure 4).

A closer look at the actor types in the networks of Greek asylum-related organisations reveals a relatively homogeneous pattern. The visualisation of the organisations we interviewed and of their cooperation partners consists almost entirely of NGOs, with only a small number of executive actors and scientific organisations involved. Examination of the egocentric networks of these NGOs shows that they clearly tend to name other NGOs as partners, whereas organisations such as IMEPO, EKKE and the Afghan community show no such tendency to cooperate with actors similar to them.

Figure 5: Visualisation of asylum-related organisations, their spatial reach and cooperation



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–16.

The networks of Greek asylum-related organisations are heterogeneous with respect to their spatial reach and the driving norms and values of the actors. The organisations that were interviewed rely primarily on cooperation with organisations working on both a national and an international level (see Figure 5). Established NGOs such as PRAKSIS and ERP tend to have cooperation partners that work on different levels (see Figure 5). The important actor UNHCR also tries to collaborate with organisations working at various levels, mostly local or regional and national (see Figure 5), perhaps owing to its coordinating role in the country.

Remarkably, only a small number of national executive actors are involved, such as the Greek Asylum Service and the First Reception Service (see Figure 5), which were first created at the launch of the new asylum procedure in 2013. Also, European political actors are rare and not well connected to other organisations. EASO and the European Commission each have only one cooperation partner who named them during our interviews (see Figure 5).

With regard to the driving norms and values, we found that the cooperation partners share most of the basic and non-negotiable values: “*The ones we cooperate with share more or less [our] values*” (Aitima 2016). The most prevalent value is humanitarianism, and about half the organisations in the reconstructed part of the Greek asylum-related network⁵ share this value (see Figure 6). But common correlations can also be seen between actor types and the dominant norms and values – the NGOs’ dominant norms and values are the enforcement of human rights or humanitarianism (see Figure 6). There are also a few NGOs that represent religious values, such as Caritas, an organisation related to the Catholic Church. Objectivity is the main norm of the two research institutes, EKKE and ELIAMEP; the executive actors share political values (see Figure 6).

5 We refer here to the entire asylum-related network in Greece. The term is explained in the first chapter of this book.

5.2. *The Role of NGOs in the Field of Asylum*

The primary role of the NGOs is to work directly in the field to provide aid to asylum seekers and refugees on a first-needs basis, which includes food, toiletries, clothes and accommodation, medical and legal aid (e.g. Caritas 2016; Aitima 2016; PRAKSIS 2016). The representative of ELIAMEP stated that, *“the role of the NGOs is going to be the same as it was in the past – to try to support the asylum seekers in all possible ways in Greece because asylum seekers in Greece are not supported by the state. So, what the NGOs were doing in the past and are still going to do is to substitute the state, basically”* (ELIAMEP 2016). Nevertheless, there are some serious problems with these gaps. It is difficult to provide shelter, access to application procedures and financial aid to those who are recognised as refugees. Based on the interviews, the NGOs are filling the gaps because of the state’s passivity: *“We are only covering the gaps which the government leaves”* (MSF 2016). *“The state is overwhelmed by the situation and they are not coping very well, but we have the people in our door and we have to cope”* (Caritas Athens 2016).

Specifically, Antigone (2016) refers to the gap left by the state in Idomeni: *“there is an absence of government initiative in this area, except for the food, which is given by the Greek army every day. For all the rest, it is the NGOs that give the humanitarian assistance and without them the situation would be much worse.”*

Some NGOs, such as Amnesty International and Antigone, publish reports and carry out monitoring in hopes of providing information about the asylum situation to civil society and for scientific research.

5.3 *Isomorphism*

With regard to the theoretical context of this study, our analysis of the interviews provides evidence of three different types of isomorphism: mimetic, normative and coercive isomorphism. In the following, we will refer to each of them.

Mimetic Isomorphism

One striking phenomenon of the developing refugee crisis is the substantial increase in the number of local and international NGOs, which has been leading to the emergence and growth of new networks and certain dynamics within these networks. For example, some forms of mimetic isomorphism were identified in the statements of representatives from the NGOs. The distinction between emerging and established NGOs in the organisational field of Greece is significant. In reference to the new NGOs, clear tendencies towards mimetic isomorphism become evident when they begin to adopt the practices of organisations that have more extensive experience in asylum-related work in Greece. For example, PRAKSIS states that they *“do have meetings with other organisations to see if there is a good practice that everyone could follow. Of course, there’s an exchange of lessons learned. It depends on the specific issue and question”* (PRAKSIS 2016). This practice corresponds to results of previous research on small NGOs. Tiina Kontinen (2005) notes that small NGOs are more likely to orientate towards organisations that are perceived to be experienced and well established.

Often the process of mimetic isomorphism will result from informal cooperation ties within the field, but it also occurs through (informal) networking among local working organisations – a process in which even the more established organisations try to learn new practices. In addition, these groups tend to recommend these best practices to other organisations, as Aitima explains: *“when we also find something that is good or successful, we communicate it to other organisations and we recommend it”* (Aitima 2016).

In contrast to the mimetic processes of the newer and rather small NGOs, organisations that are well established and are more specialised are more likely to rely on their own practices. For example, MSF and Amnesty International do not refer to any instances of official cooperation and emphasise their own manner of working: *“No, we only do Amnesty stuff here”* (Amnesty International 2016). Whether it is their high degree of specialisation, their long-standing practices or their size that causes these organisations to resist mimetic isomorphism is difficult to determine.

Normative Isomorphism

Focusing on normative isomorphism, one sees a predominantly homogeneous organisational field when examining the educational backgrounds of staff who work in asylum-related organisations: *“Most people are human rights-based; my colleagues are human rights-based, myself included. And either from law studies or political sciences, these are the two main sectors that people are working in here. I don’t speak about health aid organisations because they certainly have more colleagues with the [same] experience, doctors and staff”* (Amnesty International 2016). Other organisations provide similar descriptions; organisations such as PRAKSIS and Aitima stress the similarity in the educational backgrounds of both their staffs and the co-workers with whom they cooperate.

The situation of the organisations’ driving norms and values is more diverse. As MSF states, most of the cooperating organisations share the same values: *“We always chose the best cooperation partners. And also [...] their principles have to be close to ours”* (MSF 2016). Aitima (2016) states that the cooperating organisations mostly share basic values (e.g. the consideration of human rights), but that they also have to make compromises to ensure safe and successful collaboration: *“Of course, there are differences, sometimes big differences, but generally, we can say that there are some basic standards that are common.”*

To conclude, our findings with regard to shared values were more diverse than those concerning the educational backgrounds of the cooperating partners, although in both aspects the interviewed organisations and their cooperation partners appear to be more similar than different.

Coercive Isomorphism

Our analysis of the process of coercive isomorphism shows the most interesting dynamics in Greece. Many organisations report feeling highly dependent on funders for their financial resources. When accepting funding, these groups are in constant fear of having to stick to certain practices and discourses in order to survive financially. The representative from the self-organisational Greek Forum of Refugees particularly stresses this: *“[Funding] is through some projects. It is very tricky also and risky also [knowing] how to participate in these projects. ‘Project’ means you are taking some money. Taking some money means you are dependent on somebody”*

(Greek Forum of Refugees 2016). On the other hand, organisations such as MSF, which are funded entirely by private donations, report a sense of organisational and ideological independence.

Like other interviewed organisations, MSF stresses the importance of being independent from government and governmental organisations because it enables them to criticise the Greek government and the EU, which are generally perceived as being responsible for the refugee crisis: *“Of course, as we are supporting all projects with only private funding donations, we have no state support (no European support). That allows us to be more flexible in our capacity”* (MSF 2016).

Other organisations have different experiences with regard to their dependence on funding, such as Aitima, which does not promote its work and therefore was almost forced to close in 2015. Aitima stresses the importance of publicising an organisation’s activities in order to receive funding: *“If you do not communicate about your work, you get no financial support. The refugees themselves say, ‘Aitima is a very good organisation, they help, they are not bureaucratic; when we come, we have support.’ But the refugees cannot support you financially”* (Aitima 2016).

5.4 Asylum System and the Situation in Greece

The overall asylum situation in Greece is constitutive for the work of the refugee-related organisations and their networks. At the time of the interviews (March 2016), there was no legal way to enter Greece for people seeking protection. Most of them are dependent on smugglers who offer transportation from Turkey to the Aegean islands, which are located only a few kilometres from the Turkish mainland. Many people die while crossing the Aegean Sea because the boats are unstable and in poor condition: *“If you imagine you are an asylum seeker and you want to get to Europe, the only way to enter is through the Aegean Sea, and this involves being dependent on smugglers to help you, to move you to the coast, with all the risks [...]. There are no legal routes for asylum seekers or refugees”* (EKKE 2016).

After these people seeking protection reach Greece, their situation and living conditions do not seem to improve at all. Detention centres at the ‘hotspots’ such as Lesbos or Athens are particularly overcrowded. Many NGOs criticise the lack of hygienic and medical provisions. According to MSF, workers often could not provide even minimal standards of care in

the camps: *“It is like an African setting here. The number of organisations and the situation here is worse than in Africa, because in Africa we can [meet the] minimum criteria: one toilet for 20 people, soap, five litres of water per day. [...] For example, 80 per cent of the medical issues that we are treating are created by the living conditions. People have to live outside, with no access to water, food, toilets, and at the same time they get sick. Challenges are with the policies that [do] not car[e] about the people”* (MSF 2016).

In considering the inadequate asylum system in Greece, NGOs point to many human rights violations and criticise the overall living conditions of asylum seekers and refugees in these hotspots: *“It is a problem of the system itself. If you arrive in Athens, you get a paper. ‘In 30 days you need to leave the country’, it says. You cannot stay in Athens and you cannot go to the borders. If the police catch you after the 30 days, you go to prison as an illegal migrant. The only choice you have is to apply for asylum via Skype. You don’t know how to read and write, don’t know what Skype is about and have no internet access. Even when you cross all these barriers and you can make an appointment via Skype, you get an appointment in two months’ time. If you get caught by the police, then you are already in jail. This is a caricature of an asylum system that is not constructed to serve the people”* (MSF 2016).

Difficulties in obtaining access to this system also represent overwhelming barriers for the asylum seekers and lead to the marginalisation of migrants: *“60 per cent have no work in Greece [for] the young people. If then people on the move are working on the move, it creates labour trafficking and also sex trafficking. Sex for two euros and five euros. Greece is in a crisis itself. It is difficult to find work in general”* (MSF 2016). The Greek asylum system used to be controlled by the national authorities and, as noted earlier, the Greek police were in charge of certain asylum-related decisions. To create a more autonomous asylum system, the procedure was revised in 2013, and with the change in the government in 2015, a new ministry was established to deal with the complex situation of migration to Greece. As efforts were made to improve the quality of the asylum procedure, the recognition rate increased. Nevertheless, there was a backlog because of the lack of resources for accommodating the growing number of people seeking protection (ELIAMEP 2016).

Insufficient access to the asylum application system also created a considerable backlog and failed to take pressure off the detention centres: *“This is not a refugee crisis, this is just a reception and management*

crisis” (MSF 2016). In the view of Amnesty International, “*things were very difficult because if international organisations hadn’t intervened during the summer, the problem would certainly be bigger because the Greek state not only didn’t have what was needed at that time but also didn’t have the personnel to do it; they had a very bureaucratic system, so all the funds were delayed. So not only lack of funding, but lack of people, lack of knowledge – it was a puzzle of things that stopped things from functioning and being well prepared*” (Amnesty International 2016).

After the governmental change in 2015, the Greek state decided to make some legal changes concerning the rights of asylum seekers. However, the implementation of these new laws was inadequate and ultimately failed owing to the government’s lack of resources. According to the Greek Forum of Refugees, “*we had some legal changes also; for example, asylum seekers didn’t have the right to work. They still don’t have the right to work, but they changed the law – as I told you, changing the law is one thing here and implementing it is another – it still is not implemented here*” (Greek Forum of Refugees 2016).

5.5 The Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

As for the implementation of CEAS, most of the interviewees do not consider the sharing of responsibility among all member states to be successful. For example, the European states seem to interpret the legal framework of CEAS in different ways: “*Even though it tries to harmonise the policies, the asylum policy as such still remains in [the] state. This is a big problem; so, if something has to change, then there should be a CEAS in the sense that decisions are made on the European level, so no countries have their own interpretation, adaptation, regulations of the CEAS. It should be treated equally on the European level*” (EKKE 2016).

The Dublin II Regulation was suspended because of human rights violations in the EU entry countries. For example, Germany stopped the relocation of asylum seekers who were initially registered in Greece. The Greek Forum of Refugees weighs in: “*In which points was there good cooperation? For example, [the Dublin II Directive] stated that every asylum seeker who is entering Europe should ask for it at the entry point and if they go to other countries they should send them back. In 2010, other European countries (at first Germany) announced that they will not*

apply this directive because Greece is a country that can't afford all this asylum, because it is the entry point" (Greek Forum of Refugees 2016).

Gradually, this procedure was abandoned with the closing of the Balkan route. The CEAS guidelines could not be implemented by the Greek state on its own. The result was an outsourcing of responsibilities, which took the form of the EU–Turkey agreement. ELIAMEP explains: “[CEAS] is non-existent. Because you need a country to do the dirty job in order for other countries to do what has to be done, in order for[... for example] Norway or Germany and Sweden to have a proper and fair asylum system. Greece has to develop an unfair and non-operational asylum system like it used to be in the past. Otherwise, it does not work. [...] This was always part of CEAS. It needed states to fail [at] CEAS in order to have a CEAS. Failure is integrated into the system, in order for the system to exist” (ELIAMEP 2016).

5.6 The European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

Many of the interviewees had little to say about the work of EASO, perhaps because this office has been in operation a relatively short time, since 2011 (EASO homepage 2016). In addition, most of the interviewees are active on a local or regional level, whereas EASO presumably cooperates to a greater extent with governmental and intergovernmental actors working on an international level. When asked about EASO, the Greek Forum of Refugees had the following comments: “*They are the authorities; they are working on the high level. They are cooperating with Frontex, they are cooperating with member states, with governments – we don't know exactly what is going on. And we see the discussion between these authorities and others, on the high level they are making decisions [...] we [never had] any cooperation or discussion with it*” (Greek Forum of Refugees 2016).

As for the Greek asylum system, EASO is regarded as supporting the newly created Ministry of Migration and is expected to supply the asylum system with needed resources, especially for the relocation of asylum seekers. With the anticipated increase in asylum applications as a result of the EU–Turkey agreement, Antigone predicts the following: “*EASO cooperates closely with the Ministry and will cooperate more closely after the agreement. But we have to wait, to see how close and [on what terms the] cooperation [will be]*” (Antigone 2016).

The only interviewed NGO that cooperates with EASO is PRAKSIS. In this case, EASO supports the relocation process and delegates tasks in a one-way relationship to benefit from the experience of this NGO: *“So, PRAKSIS staff does cooperate with EASO to process their requests of relocation applicants. Mainly our role is on the accommodation side. So we work with EASO to get referrals for those who have joined the relocation process to come for accommodation”* (PRAKSIS 2016).

To sum up the relationship between Greek organisations and EASO, one could say that there is cooperation with the support office to various degrees but that EASO is not really permeable. Therefore, both intergovernmental and governmental organisations operate mostly on a national or international level and rarely cooperate with organisations working at the local level.

5.7 Criticism and Suggestions

When asked to state their wishes and suggestions with regard to asylum-related issues, most of the interviewees offered similar suggestions. One major demand was that the Greek state be put in a position to coordinate the work of the asylum process and to fulfil its governmental responsibility, replacing the UNHCR as an accountable key actor. In Caritas Athens' view, *“The state is doing very little. Basically if the state was doing their job better, we wouldn't have people here in need. If the state was really working well and prioritised this thing over other things, we wouldn't have this problem”* (Caritas Athens 2016).

There is also a need to improve the overloaded Greek asylum system in light of its low recognition rates when compared with those of other European countries, as well as a call for attention to the inhumane living conditions currently in evidence in detention centres: *“The Asylum system is in crisis; they don't have enough people, it is a catastrophe. They are not dealing with it well at all”* (Caritas Athens 2016).

In addition, the interviewees mentioned the lack of financial resources and properly trained staff many times. In their estimation, this problem compounds the handling of the current refugee situation and leads to structural deficits. Antigone puts it this way: *“The first thing is that the system needs more resources, financial resources and people. It's imperative. It's conditio sine qua non, let's say; if it doesn't happen, the system will not work efficiently”* (Antigone 2016). And Aitima recommends, *“What we*

need are resources and to be able to have the necessary staff to deal with the influx of the people. The system is not working, you have no good access to the asylum system, you have many problems because of the lack of staff. So you have structural problems” (Aitima 2016). The interviewee from ELIAMEP makes a similar statement, focusing more on the responsibility of the EU: *“Yes, definitely more staff is needed. And also support from the EU is needed. The staff is simply not enough”* (ELIAMEP 2016).

Some criticism is directed at the EU and the current politics of its member states. For most actors, the need for a common European asylum policy, with a fair distribution of asylum applicants among the European states, is obvious. Greece, as an entry country to the EU, should not be left to fend for itself, considering the vast number of refugee arrivals. The representative from ELIAMEP had this to say: *“In my point of view, asylum applications should be examined across EU member states, so we should develop an earlier way of responsibility sharing, because this is what it really is. It is the responsibility of the EU to assess asylum applications, and when we are talking about these kinds of numbers, it is impossible for a single state to cope with them. So either you need a Common European Asylum Service, which assesses the applications, or you need these asylum applications to be distributed equally among all the EU member states in order to have a fair assessment”* (ELIAMEP 2016). Amnesty International also calls for greater participation from those in power in the European countries: *“The European leaders should implement a sustainable and big program for resettlement from other countries that already host a great number of refugees. (...)The relocation system should be more flexible than it is at the moment because we don’t see the numbers rise through the months of implementation, and also the existing legislation [needs] to be more flexible and effective, like family reunification and liberalisation of visas for people who are here for education or work and all this stuff”* (Amnesty International 2016).

Greek Forum of Refugees criticises the way in which Europe encapsulates itself as a ‘fortress’ from its neighbouring countries is criticised by: *“[At the] European level of course we are saying that making walls is not the solution and there should be a responsibility sharing. You can’t stop refugees; it is impossible [to] stop the people [from] wanting this. They will find a way”* (Greek Forum of Refugees 2016).

The legal basis of the EU agreement with Turkey and its function with regard to refugee resettlement are questioned by almost every actor we interviewed, as illustrated by these comments from the ELIAMEP repre-

representative: *“My proposal would be the thing I proposed before – a proper responsibility-sharing mechanism. And also a resettlement mechanism, also from Turkey to the EU, but without connecting the resettlement of the people to deportation of other people, because this is what happens in reality right now”* (ELIAMEP 2016).

To summarise the actors’ views, many urgent improvements are needed, which include more effective policy-making and practical support on both the national and the European level. This is regarded as possible only through the creation of an appropriate responsibility-sharing mechanism and an EU asylum policy based on solidarity.

6. Conclusion

Greece, because of its geographical location, is one of the main entry points to the EU for people seeking protection. It is also used as a transition country for those intending to reach EU countries other than Greece, such as Germany or Sweden. The current state of research in the field of asylum-related issues focuses on the marginalisation of asylum seekers and the obstacles they face during the application process. One can point specifically to the fluid situation regarding the change in the Greek government and the closing of the Balkan route, which were shaped mainly by political decisions made on the European level.

People seeking protection risk their lives trying to reach Greece and must often depend on smugglers. There is no legal way of migrating for people on the move. They suffer from the lack of hygienic and proper medical care in the detention centres where they are treated like criminals and must often remain for long periods of time. They also become marginalised because the asylum system fails to provide legal residence permits and financial aid. Crucial to the narratives of most of the actors interviewed in this study are the inadequate and inefficient asylum system (despite its being improved after the change in the Greek government) and the fact that NGOs must make up for the gaps in governmental services.

As for the networks of the organisations we examined, cooperation appears to be important for successful work in the organisational field of asylum-related issues. The most important aspects of the cooperation networks are the sharing of resources and expertise in times of scarce funding, and specialisation and (thematic) networking in order to raise awareness among the public and to put pressure on the politicians on a different

scale. For the most part, there is no official cooperation between the organisations, but rather a less formal ad hoc cooperation that is focused on the immediate needs of those working in the field. As the recent refugee crisis has been developing, these informal networks have grown and many new NGOs have emerged in the organisational field in Greece. In order to provide sufficient aid to people seeking protection, the networks tend to be somewhat heterogeneous, allowing the organisations to share resources and distribute tasks among the various organisations. Taking into account the educational backgrounds and driving norms of the actors, a tendency towards homogeneous networks is observed.

With regard to the asylum situation and how it has changed over time, it is difficult to say what role the government would have played had the financial situation been better and in the absence of other political and decisive developments, such as the EU–Turkey agreement and the closure of the Balkan routes. According to most of the interviewees, the governing party is showing good will when it comes to improving the asylum-related situation, but it is definitely overburdened by the large influx of refugees and a growing number of asylum applications. There also are structural deficiencies in the system resulting from the long-standing lack of strategies in Greek politics concerning migration and asylum.

If we consider the theoretical complex of neo-institutionalism, different tendencies of isomorphism can be identified. In the case of Greece, one of the most important processes appears to be the deliberate dissociation from the Greek government of many interviewed NGOs in the field. They feel the state should bear some responsibility for the refugee crisis, yet it does not provide enough services for the asylum seekers. The Greek government participates in the EU politics of isolation and its questionable actions in keeping these migrants from entering the EU. In terms of their financial needs, the interviewed organisations do not want to be regarded as part of the problem by accepting government funding and thus losing their credibility. In this regard, the paradigm shift and the support of different organisations as a result of the governmental change are not evident, perhaps because the fluid situation in Greece overshadows other discursive changes that could evolve and thus alter the hegemonic discourses. It is also possible that the government's financial resources are not sufficient to support other organisations as a way to change the field and initiate certain kinds of isomorphism.

In the case of mimetic isomorphism, the newly emerging (informal) networks generally tend to copy best practices. With the on-going refugee

crisis, this behaviour can be differentiated from that of the more established NGOs that have been working in the field for at least several years. Therefore, the new NGOs often align themselves with the practices of these veteran organisations. In contrast, the well-established organisations rely on their own practices, masking any paradigmatic changes that may ensue from the governmental change and the refugee crisis. Therefore, the gaps between talk and action referred to in Hypothesis 4 are not observed in the more established organisations, which explicitly refer to an attachment to their established paradigms but are also open to learning about other best practices.

If we consider evidence of normative isomorphism, most of those in the organisational field are lawyers, social scientists and social workers, so one could acknowledge a certain degree of homogeneity as regards the educational background of the staff. With respect to shared values, the organisations report that they do share basic values, such as humanitarianism and antiracism, but they also admit that to ensure proper cooperation, they must make certain compromises.

In following the EU–Turkey agreement, the Greek asylum system and the Greek organisations must constantly face new challenges. Rising numbers of asylum applications are expected for 2016, and Greece is now turning from a country of transit into a country of destination, so issues of migration and integration policy will become more important. The agreement itself appears to be fragile owing to the current political circumstances in Turkey. Further research will be needed concerning the highly dynamic and constantly evolving situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece.

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Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically:

Aitima
Amnesty International
Antigone
Caritas Athens
EKKE
ELIAMEP
Greek Forum of Refugees
MSF
PRAKSIS
Syriza

Malta Report

*Lana Horsthemke, Friederike Vogt, Charlott Becker-Jamme,
Gerrit Zumstein*

1. Introduction

The Republic of Malta is an archipelago located in the Central Mediterranean Sea, 290 km north of the Libyan coast and about 90 km south of Sicily. It consists of five islands: Malta, Gozo, Comino, Cominotto and Filfla, of which only the first three are inhabited.

Malta gained its independence from the United Kingdom on 21 September 1964,¹ and became a democratic republic on 13 December 1974. It joined the European Union in May 2004. The government consists of a legislative House of Representatives (*Il-Kamra Tad-Deputati*) that elects the head of the government, which is the Prime Minister (currently Joseph Muscat).² The Parliament of Malta is located in the capital, Valletta, and consists of the House of Representatives and the president, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca.

Throughout its history Malta has been influenced by many different cultures owing to its former domination by Arab, Norman, European and English administrators, and these effects continue to be reflected in Maltese culture today. The official languages of the country are English and Maltese.

With a size of 316 km² (Statista 2016a) and a population of 0,4 million (Statista 2016b), Malta is the smallest country in the EU but has the highest population density (1,361 people per km²) and a relatively low unemployment rate (3,9 % - as of July 2016) (Auswärtiges Amt 2016; Statista 2016c). The Gross Domestic Product per capita in Malta was last recorded at 24,103 US dollars in 2013 (Statista 2016d).

The migration situation in Malta has changed drastically over the years. Within the European migration field, Malta used to be considered a “*dead*

1 All general information about Malta has been obtained from the Maltese government's website, www.gov.mt.

2 The last election was on 11 March 2013 (www.gov.mt).

end” for people fleeing to Northern Europe to seek protection. At the beginning of this century, more than 10,000 people³ reached Malta by boat, mistaking it for a transit country,⁴ but the number of boat arrivals has now decreased dramatically (UNHCR 2016a). This is related to an informal agreement⁵ between Malta and Italy with regard to rescue-at-sea operations, whereby all migrants saved within the Central Mediterranean disembark in Italy (ECRE 2015; Times of Malta 2015a; Malta Independent 2015). In 2015, only 104 people arrived in Malta by boat (UNHCR 2016a), with air travel having become the most common approach. This shift has led to a change in the countries of origin and thus the profile of asylum seekers and refugees, creating new challenges for the organisations working in this field in Malta (e.g. the need for different language interpreters) (Refugee Commissioner 2016).

In 2013 and 2014, Somalia was the country of origin for most of the nationals who were granted protection status in the first instance, followed by Eritrea in 2013 and by Sudan in 2014. However, the composition of asylum applicants changed entirely in 2015, when most of the 1,584 people who arrived via regular means came from Libya, followed by Syria (ECRE 2015: 37; UNHCR 2016a; Eurostat 2016a).

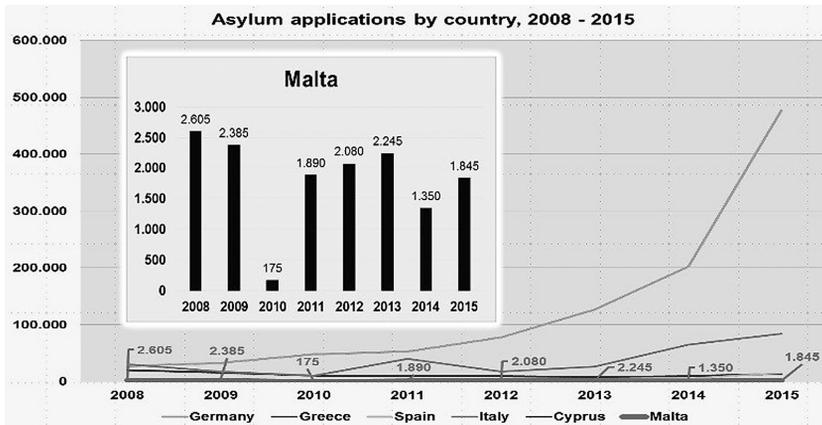
Table 1 shows the number of arrivals over the past five years, and one can see that they have been relatively constant, varying on average between 1,300 and 2,200 arrivals per year (Eurostat 2016b). Compared with other EU countries such as Italy, Germany and Greece, this is a low number (see Table 1).

3 Between 2003 and 2009, a total of 11,402 people arrived in Malta by boat (UNHCR 2016a).

4 Information about Malta as a “*dead end*” and “*arrivals by mistake*” is drawn from the interview with the Office of the Refugee Commissioner (ORC) (2016).

5 AIDA Report: Malta 2015; *Times of Malta*, 22 April 2015; *Malta Independent*, 15 September 2015.

Table 1: Asylum applications by country, 2008–15



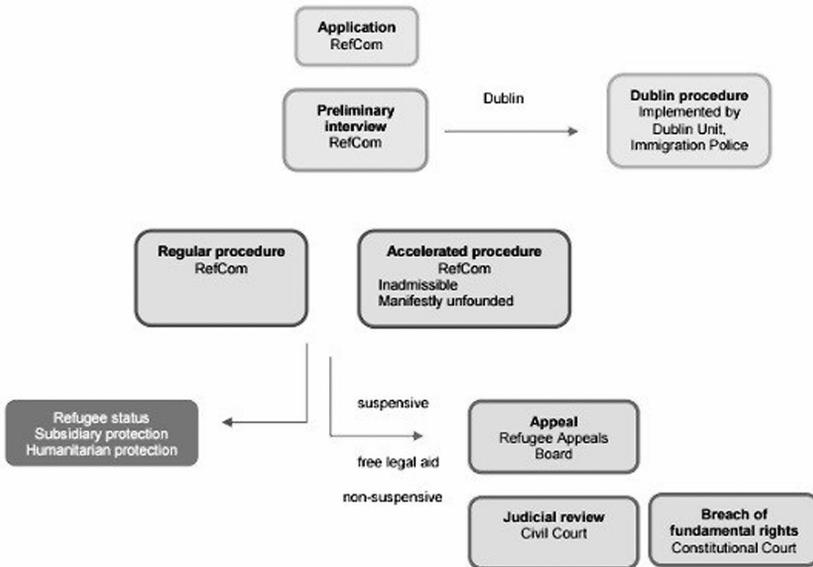
Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2016b).

In 2015, a total of 1,845 people⁶ applied for asylum in Malta (UNHCR 2016a). With about four asylum applications per 1,000 inhabitants, the Maltese application rate is one of the highest within the EU.⁷ Malta also had the second highest rate of positive first-instance asylum decisions in 2015 (85.3%) (Eurostat 2016c). In the first half of 2016 there has been already 770 first-time asylum applications in Malta (Eurostat 2016d). This corresponds to about 1,786 asylum applicants per million inhabitants (Eurostat 2016e).

6 Note that the reported numbers vary between Eurostat and UNHCR.

7 The average number of asylum applications in the EU is about 2.6 per 1,000 inhabitants (Eurostat 2016).

Figure 1: Flow chart of the asylum procedure in Malta



Source: ECRE (2015: 11).

In the first half of 2016 following numbers are characteristic for asylum decision making process in Malta: total recognition rate was about 85 %, subsidiary protection rate constituted 69 % and refugee rate amounted to 11 % (Eurostat 2016f; Eurostat 2016g). In the same period of time 830 asylum decisions were made in Malta in total, 125 of which were negative (Eurostat 2016f; Eurostat 2016g).

Applications for international protection are lodged with the Refugee Commissioner (ORC), which is the authority responsible for examining and ruling on applications for international protection in Malta in the first instance (see Figure 1). The ORC is the only entity authorised by law to receive applications for international protection (ECRE 2015a: 12).⁸ Asylum applications are not valid unless they are lodged within 60 days of the applicant’s arrival in Malta. Following the initial collection of information by means of a preliminary questionnaire, an appointment is scheduled for an interview (ECRE 2015b). Once the applicant is called in for the inter-

8 The description of the asylum procedure is based on the AIDA Report: Malta 2015.

view, he or she will be asked to fill in the official form to apply for international protection (ECRE 2015a: 12).

In Malta, there is also an administrative tribunal, the Refugee Appeals Board. Currently made up of six chambers, this board is entrusted to hear and rule on appeals that challenge the recommendations issued by the ORC (ECRE 2015a: 13). An appeal can have a suspensory effect, because an asylum seeker may not be removed from Malta until a final decision is made. This is the case when the regular procedure is employed in adjudicating the majority of applications for international protection. Accelerated procedures are also provided for in national law for applications that appear to be *prima facie* inadmissible or manifestly unfounded (ECRE 2015a: 27).

The procedure used to assess applications for international protection for detained applicants is identical to that used for applicants who are not detained. The ORC is authorised to grant one of three types of protection: refugee status, subsidiary protection status or temporary humanitarian protection. During the asylum process and after the applicant's status has been determined, the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) can accommodate asylum seekers in initial reception facilities, which were introduced in Malta in 2015 (ECRE 2015a: 41; MHAS 2015).

2. *Current State of Research*

The number of people seeking protection who arrive via regular means has increased enormously, and the number of asylum applicants is now more than twice the number of those arriving by boat⁹ (People for Change Foundation 2015: 23). The fact that most migrants currently arrive regularly by plane is problematic for the Maltese migration strategy, which was designed for irregular arrivals by boat. Consequently, people seeking asylum in Malta who arrive in regular ways will not be recorded by the initial reception centres (AIDA 2016). In their second annual report (the Human Rights Report 2015), the People for Change Foundation noted that

[M]aritime migration has for a number of years [been] a key issue of socio-political concern for the Maltese population. This is partly due to the media and political visibility of migrant arrivals by boat, which has provided a par-

9 This statistic is for the year 2014.

tial and ill-informed perception of migration realities in Malta (People for Change Foundation 2015: 19).

Because its migration situation has changed over the years, Malta is not facing the refugee crisis that now confronts other EU member states. The low number of irregular migrants reaching Maltese shores in 2015 was at least in part the result of the Italian government's Mare Nostrum operation.¹⁰ This mission, which includes both air and sea rescue operations, has saved about 150,000 people, most of whom disembarked in Italy (People for Change Foundation 2015: 20).

The MAREM research project was designed to determine the extent to which the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) has led to changes in the work of asylum- and refugee-related organisations with respect to cooperation partners, approaches to the integration of migrants and practical adjustments. Because of the lack of scientific studies that address the recent changes caused by the implementation of CEAS, most of the information presented in this report was drawn from publications by the different stakeholders within the field of asylum and refugees in Malta. This project is an attempt to fill this gap by analysing the circumstances of the implementation and the resulting cooperation among the main actors in this field.

The last decade saw continuous change in the Maltese asylum system, especially in 2013, when the Labour Party under Joseph Muscat won the election. By the end of 2015, a new migration strategy was introduced by the MHAS that abolished the detention policy (AIDA 2016). Until then, people entering Maltese territory without the permission of the Principal Immigration Officer could be detained by the state authorities in an effort to protect national security and the public order (MHAS and Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity 2005; AIDA 2015: 54).

On a local level, NGOs such as the Aditus Foundation and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) had criticised

the mandatory and arbitrary nature of the policy of detention, the length and conditions of detention, the poor conditions in open centres, the lack of adequate support for particular categories of vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers, and the huge obstacles to integration (JRS 2015: 5).

10 The Italian government initiated this mission in response to the Lampedusa tragedy in October 2013, when more than 300 migrants drowned in the Mediterranean Sea (People for Change Foundation 2015).

On the European level, the Council of Europe's committee of ministers demanded that the Maltese government adapt further to the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights after three successful complaints by migrants in Malta (Malta Today 2015).

The new government also set up a new ministry in 2013 – the MSDC – with the intention of establishing an institutional framework for dialogue with social actors and civil society in general.¹¹ In addition to the new migration strategy, the MSDC published “Mind D Gap” in June 2015, which proposed a national integration strategy that provided guidelines for a systematic approach to integration, showing that the issues of migration and integration were related to national policy¹². Thereby, their norms and values would contribute to the government's pledge

to celebrate diversity, to recognise the social realities around us, to cherish Maltese identity without discrimination, to ensure equality and respect towards minority groups and above all, to safeguard the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all. It is the government's belief that the current realities faced by migrants coming from third countries (i.e. countries that are not EU Member States), require immediate attention (MSDC 2015: 6).

Considering that Malta is often regarded as a transition locality on the way to the European mainland, especially to Northern Europe, the newly devised integration strategy met with resistance from the outset. One such difficulty was the short timeframe involved, because the MSDC was established in 2013 and the integration strategy was not published until 2015.

Because most of the literature available concerning the Maltese asylum system and the organisations working in this field has been prepared by state authorities and does not have a scientific basis, our focus of interest and the associated research questions are as follows:

1. *To what extent does the implementation of CEAS cause practical changes in the work of the asylum-related actors?* This question focuses on the practical changes in the work done by asylum- and refugee-related organisations as a result of the implementation of CEAS.

11 For further information, see https://socialdialogue.gov.mt/en/Pages/The_Ministry/Brief.aspx.

12 For more information on “Mind D Gap”, see https://socialdialogue.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MSDC/Pages/Consultations/MDGIntegration.aspx.

2. *To what extent does EASO, as the executive actor of CEAS, influence asylum- and refugee-related actors in Malta?* Because the EASO is the agency entrusted with supporting the EU member states in implementing CEAS, our research also focuses on EASO's special role within the organisational field of asylum- and refugee-related actors in order to analyse the extent to which the Maltese organisations communicate with or are influenced by the work of EASO.
3. *How do NGOs and the Maltese government approach integration? Have there been any recent changes in their policies and therefore in their approach?* This research is also focused on Malta's recent approach to the integration of migrants. Therefore, the changes in the asylum system were analysed in terms of the recent development of the integration policy.
4. *Does the theory of neo-institutionalism (which is explained in the first chapter of this book) apply to the cooperation of Maltese asylum-related organisations?* Elements of the theory of neo-institutionalism will be assessed based on the data collected in Malta in 2016. The main aim of this research is to analyse the extent to which organisations must adjust and therefore become more similar in their structure and practices and create homogeneous cooperation networks regarding the relevant characteristics of these organisations in order to survive within their working field. To address this fourth research question, we developed three hypotheses, which are described next.

3. Hypotheses

Based on the theory of neo-institutionalism, three hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 1 (Normative isomorphism): Because they apply certain standards of professionalisation when choosing staff members, the organisations are likely to be similar to one another in their working practices.

Hypothesis 2 (Coercive isomorphism): Owing to their dependence on centralised sources of funding, organisations must meet certain expectations of their donors.

Hypothesis 3 (Mimetic isomorphism): Owing to the exchange of best practices among the organisations, the (egocentric) networks of asylum-related actors in Malta tend to be homogeneous.

4. Data

To gain a profound understanding of the organisational field and the cooperation of asylum- and refugee-related organisations in Malta, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with seven organisations during the field research in Malta, which took place between 7 and 14 March 2016.

The seven interviewed organisations have been categorised according to the following criteria: (1) their **actor type** (official executive actor, civil society nongovernmental organisation (NGO), intergovernmental organisation (IGO), research institute), (2) their field of action and legitimation and **spatial reach** (local/regional, national, European, international, transnational), (3) **driving norms and values** (religious, political, enforcement of law, objectivity or human rights-oriented), (4) the **main issues** they work on (asylum- and refugee-related or multiple) and (5) their **resources** (private, public or mixed). The categorisation is based on website analyses and on the self-description of the organisations in documents and interviews. Table 2 gives an overview of the interviewed organisations and their main characteristics.

Table 2: Overview of the organisations interviewed in Malta and their characteristics

Interviewed organisation	Actor type	Driving norms and values	Spatial reach	Main issues	Resources
Aditus Foundation	NGO	Human rights	National	Asylum Seekers and Refugees	Private
IOM (International Organisation for Migration)	IGO	Human rights	Global	Multiple	Mixed
EASO (European Asylum Support Office)	GO	Political	European	Multiple	EU funds
NCPE (National Commission for the Promotion of Equality)	GO	Human rights	National	Multiple	Mixed
MSDC (Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties)	GO	Political	National	Multiple	Gov. funds/ EU funds

Interviewed organisation	Actor type	Driving norms and values	Spatial reach	Main issues	Resources
MHAS (Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security)	GO	Political	National	Multiple	Gov. funds/ EU funds
ORC (Office of the Refugee Commissioner)	GO	Enforcement of law	National	Asylum Seekers and Refugees	Gov. funds/ EU funds

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

Five of the seven interviews were conducted with governmental stakeholders in different positions within the field of asylum-related actors. These GOs are as follows:

The newly established MSDC focuses on the integration of migrants in Malta. Among other things, it is responsible for establishing framework documents from which the strategy for integration can be drafted (MSDC 2016).

MHAS and its departments work on multiple issues related to national security (e.g. border control, detention service and human trafficking) (MHAS 2016).

The main role of the ORC is to rule on asylum applications. The Refugee Commissioner has a special role in this field owing to his position as a neutral decision-maker (ORC 2016).

The NCPE is not specifically asylum-related in that it deals with, for example, xenophobia or any other form of discrimination within Maltese society (NCPE 2016). Unlike the previous three GOs, the NCPE is not driven by political norms/enforcement of the law but rather by human rights norms, as are the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) and the Aditus Foundation.

EASO is the European institution entrusted with supporting the EU member states in implementing CEAS (EASO 2016).

The only intergovernmental actor we interviewed was IOM. All the other interviewed organisations operate for the most part on the national level, although EASO also works on the international level. IOM Malta is project-based and works on issues such as resettlement to the United

States,¹³ integration and human trafficking and also offers advice regarding policy (IOM 2016).

The Aditus Foundation is the only NGO we interviewed in our study of the asylum- and refugee-related field in Malta. Aditus is a general human rights organisation that focuses on monitoring and reviewing laws and policies. It has a small pro bono unit that offers legal advice to asylum seekers and refugees concerning their applications or appeals and also does legal work in relation to the human rights situation in Malta (Aditus Foundation 2016).

5. Results

In the following sections, we present the results of the MAREM research project undertaken in Malta in 2016.

5.1 Cooperation of Asylum-Related Organisations in Malta

With an area of approximately 316 km² (www.gov.mt)¹⁴ the Maltese territory is relatively small when compared with other Mediterranean countries such as Italy (301,340 km²) or even Cyprus (9,251 km²) (Statista 2016a). For this reason, all the asylum- and refugee-related organisations are situated in physical proximity to one another, so the people who work for these organisations tend to be acquainted:

Since Malta is quite small, we know each other quite well. All the organisations know each other. [...] So this is a kind of give-and-take [arrangement] (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Most of the interviewed organisations point out the importance of cooperation in Malta. NCPE named some of the advantages of such cooperation:

There are a couple of benefits related to coordination work and discussions with other organisations. It brings [...] knowledge sharing, information, dis-

13 Malta is the only EU member state to offer resettlement to the United States. Between 2014 and 2015, a total of 1,145 persons were resettled there, and a number of people offered the benefit of protection have been relocated to other EU member states (UNHCR 2016b).

14 For further information, see <https://www.gov.mt/en/About%20Malta/Maltese%20Islands/Pages/The-Maltese-Islands.aspx>.

ussions, identification of good practices [...]. It is very important to see what other bodies are working on to strengthen the knowledge base that you are working on (NCPE 2016).

IOM also commented on the importance of cooperation in Malta. Because the country is relatively small, the work done by the asylum- and refugee-related organisations is interlaced:

I think when you work on such a small island, in such a small environment, it is crucial to have good relations with everybody working in this field and actually to know whom to go to. And even NGOs – I consult with them [to see] whether they can provide assistance. It works very well (IOM 2016).

This statement emphasizes the importance of NGOs for the asylum system in Malta. MHAS confirms this, pointing out the exceptional position of the NGOs in that they complement the work carried out in the field of asylum and refugees with a different view of the asylum system:

[Cooperation] is very important. Cooperation with NGOs is definitely important because they offer you a different perspective (MHAS 2016).

The importance of NGOs in the system is emphasised even more by EASO. Because each actor works in a different subfield and focuses on different issues in the field of asylum and refugees, cooperation contributes to the exchange of ideas and a broad knowledge base that is strengthened further:

Yes, we believe that [the] civil society [represented by NGOs] is very important, because it is important to have different perspectives and they definitely bring you different perspectives and that is why we are interested in working with them specifically. Also when it comes to the expert input, so it is not just kind of bouncing ideas [around], asking people who are coming with a different kind of agenda, with a different kind of background. It is also about their specific expertise based on their practical work with refugees or asylum seekers (EASO 2016).

The different NGOs work together for lobbying purposes and to gain more influence on national policy, confirming the bilateral relation with governmental institutions. Aditus states:

Of course we [the NGOs located in Malta] all lobby together. We are kind of an unofficial group that works together. And we have always lobbied the government on specific issues like detention, conditions in open centres. So we have kind of joint position (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Although the Refugee Commissioner refers to the impartiality of his position, he confirms that he has a form of working relationship with other actors:

We are doing something together. We cooperate, we work, we contact each other, we have meetings and we help each other and so on. But that does not mean that we are partners (ORC 2016).

However, cooperation was not always regarded as important as is stated above. The turning point occurred on 30 June 2012, when Mamadou Kamara, a 32-year-old migrant from Mali, died while trying to escape from a detention centre (Amnesty International 2013). According to Aditus, this tragic incident should be considered a milestone for cooperation among the asylum- and refugee-related organisations in Malta. It brought the different actors together and paved the way for dialogue among them:

We had cooperated with the other organisations since the beginning, but it sort of all came together when there was a death in detention. [...] That was the first time when all the NGOs actually sat down and said, okay, we actually have to do something about it. It was the first time that the government – it was a different government then – said, okay, let’s talk. Let’s talk about a solution, about procedures, about an integration policy. It took a long time from then until now to actually have a policy (Aditus Foundation 2016).

This incident has had a lasting impact on the profound structure of cooperation among the organisations working in Malta. The NCPE even points out that the working relations are becoming steadier and the persistent exchange is ensured through regular inter-organisational contact. Cooperation is being strengthened because more meetings facilitate dialogue among different organisations (NCPE 2016). This is confirmed by IOM, which states that cooperation among the organisations in Malta can be regarded as “stable to growing” (IOM 2016). In addition to the current forms of cooperation, which occur mostly on the national level, a tendency towards internationalisation can be observed: cooperation now also takes place on the European level. MHAS points out the importance of international cooperation for the EU member states when it comes to addressing international issues:

It is also important to cooperate internationally because issues [e.g. the migration crisis] can only be addressed internationally. Ultimately I think that no member state on its own can really address the migration issue. And I think that this improved over the last year, not before. So yes, I think this is an important issue (MHAS 2016).

MSDC confirms regular contact with other organisations from other EU member states:

We are absolutely looking into collaborating internationally on integration. In human rights we have been collaborating for years now, but on integration we are just starting. [...] We are part of a network for national contact points of integration. So we have this kind of almost monthly, every two months, meeting in Brussels (MSDC 2016).

The ORC explains that the national government also focuses on EU+ countries and the countries of origin of the asylum seekers and refugees:

So I think the fact that the Maltese government has made that summit shows that they are really interested and involved and would like to bring the European countries together to see what strategy they have. [...] I believe that ultimately it is a long-term thing, we have to say that. The solution to the immigration problem [...] will be [possible] by improving the situation of the African countries, Syria and Afghanistan and so on (ORC 2016).

Cooperation in Malta is constantly evolving. Since the death of Mamadou Kamara in 2012, cooperation among the different actors continues to develop and is now about to be extended to the international – more precisely, European – level.

5.2 Network Analysis: Isomorphism

In order to verify Hypotheses 1 and 2, which are based on the mechanisms of isomorphic change (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), we explored two avenues: (1) to what extent organisations apply certain standards of professionalisation when it comes to employing new staff members (for example, organisations might require employees to have a certain kind of university degree or might have no special requirements at all); and (2) what kind of funding sources organisations receive to determine whether they are centralised or decentralised. (Hypothesis 3 will be analysed later.)

Concerning the professionalisation of employees, all interviewees state that a third-level education is required to work in their organisations. A specific field of study cannot be identified because it depends on the role of the organisation and the person's position within it:

I think that it is a pretty broad mix. I mean everyone who is a staff member here has at least a minimum of a third-level education (EASO 2016).

Even within the same backgrounds there are further differentiations in cases where certain skills are required. For example, the employees of the NGO Aditus all studied law but specialised in different key areas:

But even within the legal field we are all a bit different; we all have our different expertise. Our French lawyer is an expert on refugee law issues, Neil is more human rights and refugee law of course and I am more EU law-oriented. So even among the lawyers we have different backgrounds (Aditus Foundation 2016).

This statement in particular can be regarded as a clear sign of professionalisation, which could explain the occurrence of isomorphic processes within this organisation. Not only is a high educational level required but also specialisation in a specific subject – in this case, law with a focus on asylum issues. Because most interviewees¹⁵ indicate this level of professionalisation in NGOs and GOs, one can see that the organisations exhibit a certain level of homogeneity by choosing staff based on the minimum requirement of a first-level academic degree. However, because not all these employees have studied the same discipline or at the same university, their working practices might still be different. Thus, normative isomorphism may occur to some degree, but we cannot fully confirm this possibility at this time.

With regard to centralisation of funding being the mechanism underlying coercive isomorphism, one can see that the sources of funding for NGOs and IGOs vary. Aditus states that they finance their work

through EU projects, local and national funds and EU funds, [as well as] through research work that [we] are contracted to do from overseas. So [we] apply for a number of projects (Aditus Foundation 2016).

It is important to note that the Maltese government does not provide direct funding to NGOs, which can lead to financial shortages and challenges for these organisations. IOM, as an IGO, uses these same external sources but also receives funding from embassies and national governments:

We [...] get money from the EU, [but] we [also] call for proposals regarding projects we want to do – all directly through the government, through private donors, through embassies. In this case we have one through an embassy. We

15 Although only two examples of such organisations are mentioned here, NCPE, the ORC and MSDC gave similar answers in 2016; in the cases of NCPE and MSDC, there was no need for specialisation in a specific subject.

[cover] quite a wide spectrum. That doesn't mean it's easy, but it is quite all right (IOM 2016).

The organisations we interviewed did not mention the need to adapt to certain donors, so it is still possible that both the organisations quoted here may tailor their work accordingly. In such cases, should they need to adapt to one donor more than others – the premise for isomorphic change – more information would be needed concerning the exact amounts of money and resources being supplied; however, there was no indication of adaptation, and the evident decentralisation of funding would seem to obviate such a need. Concerning expectations with regard to isomorphism in that field, it seems unlikely that through a process of isomorphism one of those organisations would adapt to the expectations of another.

GOs, which are financed through taxes¹⁶ and EU funding mechanisms (as indicated by MHAS), and EASO, which is funded through EU taxation,¹⁷ clearly show centralised funding. One can assume homogenisation in their organisational structures and behaviour, because they might be required to meet certain donor expectations. This situation might be strengthened by additional political influence and dependency – another factor in coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150) – and can probably be assumed, owing to their putative proximity to the government. However, this assumption was not confirmed by any of the interviewed organisations and thus cannot be verified.

Based on the previous analysis, we can propose the presence of an isomorphic process within governmental institutions but not within IGOs and NGOs, so Hypothesis 2 can be confirmed only in part.

In order to verify Hypothesis 3, we looked at the extent to which the organisations' egocentric networks reflect a certain degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity. In order to follow a certain discourse of efficiency, these organisations would act similarly and presumably exchange best practices only with organisations that follow the same discourse, leading to homogeneous cooperation networks (e.g. NGOs cooperate mainly with NGOs, human rights-oriented actors with human rights-oriented actors, and so

16 For a review of the total tax revenue received by the ministries and departments of the Maltese government, see https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_A2/Public_Finance/Documents/2015/News2015_201.pdf.

17 For a review of the budget and finance of EASO, see <https://www.easo.europa.eu/budget-finance-and-accounting>.

on). To test this assumption, it was necessary to determine whether an exchange of best practices was confirmed by the organisations.

In the case of Maltese asylum- and refugee-related actors, an exchange of best practices occurs among half the interviewed organisations, as confirmed during the interviews, and different reasons were given for this practice. Aditus, for example, looks at the structures of other NGOs in particular in order to improve the efficiency of their new Pro Bono Unit:¹⁸

Yes, we look for best practices. But we also look abroad quite a bit. We would look at the way other NGOs are structured particularly because at the moment our Pro Bono Unit is quite new so we are always looking at ways to see how other organisations do it (Aditus Foundation 2016).

The NCPE indicates that coordination with others “brings about knowledge sharing, information, discussion, identification of good practices” (NCPE 2016). NCPE further specifies that “it is very important to see what [other bodies] are working on to strengthen the knowledge base you are working on” (NCPE 2016).

In addition, MSDC professes to

definitely encourage best practices [...]. There was in fact a study visit to Portugal. Portugal is quite well known to have a very good system with regard to refugees, asylum seekers – integration in general. [...]. [The] study visit [was] conducted to possibly emulate these practices in Malta in the future (MSDC 2016).

The statements by MSDC and Aditus in particular reveal their willingness to adopt the best practices of other organisations in order to become more efficient in their work. This is particularly evident in areas where organisations perceive a lack of knowledge, hope to resolve certain problems, minimise risks and work more effectively:

If we had a particular issue, either a legal issue or in approaching an authority, we would call another NGO who we know has gone through the same thing and has had success. If they did not have success, we would not go down the same road (Aditus Foundation 2016).

In the 2016 interviews, the ORC, IOM and EASO all stated that they do not exchange best practices. EASO legitimises its position by saying that

18 In order to “strengthen access to justice for those persons encountering difficulties in securing their human rights”, Aditus has provided free legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees since 2014. For more information, see <http://aditus.org.mt/our-work/projects/pro-bono-unit>.

it has a very clear mandate, as well as clear rules and structures, that are predetermined by the European Commission (EASO 2016). IOM, in contrast, prefers to “*come up with [its] own*” practices (IOM 2016) based on the organisation’s size and experience. In the case of the ORC, practices such as processing asylum cases are regulated by law and are harmonised by implementing the Asylum Procedures Directive (Directive 2013/32/EU) into Maltese national law, which leaves the ORC with little opportunity for action.

Thus, the larger, better established organisations do not seek out the best practices of others but instead maintain the identity they have already created. With regard to the interviewees that copy one another’s best practices, we can assume that their internal structures and behaviour reflect an isomorphic process. However, to fully verify this assumption, it would be necessary to monitor organisations for exchanges of best practices and to compare their internal structures and development over time.

We will now assess whether isomorphism is also reflected in more homogeneous cooperation networks in relation to the relevant characteristics of these organisations. The likelihood of isomorphic tendency increases if we consider the size of the country: the organisations in Malta report knowing each other well, sometimes even personally (Aditus Foundation 2016), which, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 155), contributes to the isomorphic process.

Before we evaluate the cooperation networks of the interviewed organisations, it is important to revisit the organisations’ own assessments of the degree to which their networks are homogeneous or heterogeneous and what they consider to be desirable. When it comes to cooperation partners, governmental and nongovernmental actors differ on whether their aim is to increase homogeneity or heterogeneity. For MSDC, for example, the goal is to establish a more homogeneous cooperation network (MSDC 2016), whereas Aditus is committed to a heterogeneous one:

Let’s hope it is not homogeneous. In the beginning it was just Maltese-led organisations. It has been Maltese people leading the discussions on migration. Over the years we have had groups from other backgrounds join us [...]. So it is pretty mixed (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Thus, an exchange of best practices might not necessarily lead to the homogenisation of an organisation’s cooperation partners, because not all the interviewees regard homogeneity as beneficial. In our analysis of networks, we focused only on those organisations that we interviewed during

the 2016 round of MAREM and that exchanged best practices: Aditus, MSDC, NCPE and MHAS. In total, 63 organisations are included in the following visualisations of the cooperation networks.

Figure 2, which displays the spatial reach of the asylum-related organisations in Malta (e.g. on the national, international and European levels), shows that the network reflects a high degree of homogeneity – most actors that operate on the national level tend to cooperate with other national organisations. However, on closer inspection, one can see that the networks of MSDC and NCPE are more homogeneous, while MHAS and Aditus have rather heterogeneous networks. If we look at the level at which best practices are being exchanged (as based on the statements made during the MAREM 2016 interviews), one can see that most of the organisations are part of international superordinate networks of other organisations working in the same field as the interviewed organisation – even if the latter have a cooperation network that includes mainly actors who work on the national level.¹⁹ These cooperation partners (not shown in Figure 2) are important because the interviewed organisations explicitly state that they exchange best practices via these networks. For example, NCPE is part of Equinet:

Cooperation in the EU setting puts us in constant liaison with the European Network of Equality Bodies [Equinet], and we participate in its working groups. There is a sharing of knowledge and an exchange of good practices, resulting in capacity building (NCPE 2016).

19 Not all the cooperation partners are included in the visualisation, because the organisations mentioned them during the interview but did not name them among the most important of their partners.

Aditus is cooperating with the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), an international NGO that promotes capacity building among NGOs whose work involves supporting undocumented migrants and helping them gain access to legal aid.

MSDC has an entirely homogeneous network on the national level but also states that it is part of an international network:

[MSDC] does collaborate on an international level. [...] We are part of the network for national contact points of integration, so we have... meetings almost monthly or every two months in Brussels, where there is a really good environment because [the participants] understand immigration, [have been] working on integration for years, and it is a good exercise in sharing good practices (MSDC 2016).

MHAS cooperates with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, which functions as a “*service exchange mechanism for governments and organisations*”.²⁰

Based on these findings, homogeneity cannot be confirmed for all the organisations’ networks. However, international cooperation through superordinate networks for the purpose of exchanging best practices and capacity building among organisations that work in the same field could be confirmed for all the interviewed organisations. With respect to the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity in their networks, we also looked at the partners with whom these organisations cooperate, and it was concluded that, owing to these superordinate networks, internal homogenisation of practices and structures does occur, because organisations exchange best practices not only on the national level but also internationally with organisations working in the same field.

Figure 3: Asylum-related organisations in Malta, their actor type and cooperation partners

20 For more information, see <https://www.icmpd.org/about-us>.

When we analysed the types of organisations within these networks (e.g. NGO, government-related actor/official executive actor, international organisation, scientific organisation), we found that only MSDC's network is homogeneous, whereas NCPE, MHAS and Aditus have heterogeneous networks and cooperate with different types of actors. In terms of actor types, we can now confirm the earlier assumption that including those who exchange best practices may not necessarily result in a homogeneous organisational network. Thus, in case of the type of actor appears to be more of a connection to homogeneity than in the case of other attributes; according to the interviewed organisations, different types of organisations are needed in order to have an efficient immigration system – that is, one that must deal with multiple issues, from human rights (traditionally stressed by NGOs) to legal aspects of the asylum procedure (especially relevant for governmental organisations). Jadwiga Maczynska from EASO stated that different tasks within the field are covered by different types of actors. Regarding the role of NGOs, she says that

they come with a certain agenda, and I say that in a positive way. They come with a strong mandate, with a strong belief, norm or value system and they criticise us, and if they do it from that perspective, it is healthy and is partly how the [immigration] system should work: that we have different roles (EA-SO 2016).

This view is supported by Aditus' statement that clients are transferred from one organisation to another to take advantage of certain competences that the organisation itself cannot provide:

Other NGOs refer a client [to us] if they have a legal issue. We would also refer clients to them if they have a social issue or a psychological issue. So it is kind of a give-and-take (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Based on these results, we conclude that an exchange of best practices is not necessarily connected to more homogeneous networks. Heterogeneity is evident among different types of cooperation partners, is valued by most of the organisations and can be seen in the network visualisation. Because no information is available on whether or not these networks have been more heterogeneous in the past, it is still not possible to fully eliminate the possibility of an isomorphic process occurring. To be certain, one would need to survey the development of the networks over a longer period of time, but for now we believe that an isomorphic process is not likely to occur in the near future. This conclusion is based on the fact that from 2014 until 2016 our results regarding the networks in MAREM have been

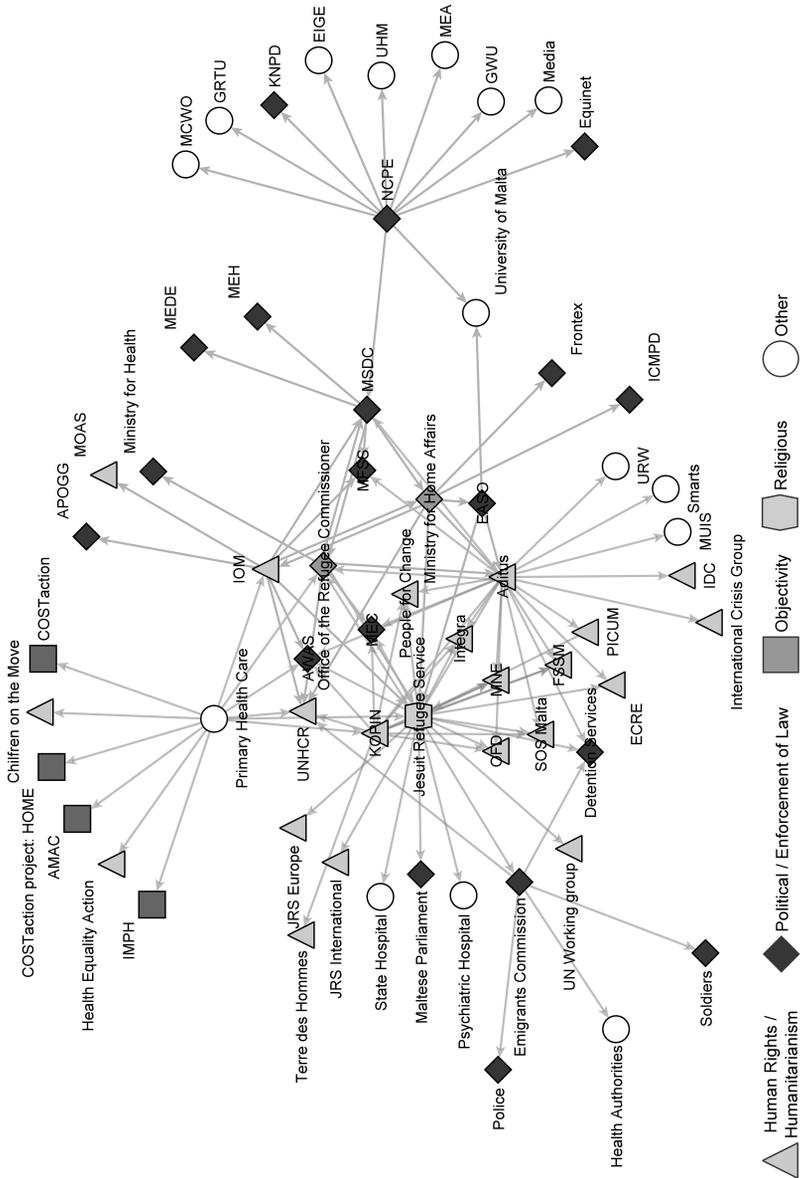
similar every year. Isomorphic change may occur if these organisations change their opinions and later regard homogeneous cooperation partners as more beneficial to their work. Because organisations do not necessarily make rational choices, this cannot be ruled out.

Figure 4 shows the norms and values of the organisations (human rights/humanitarianism, political/enforcement of law, objectivity, religious and so on). We analysed these networks to determine whether the conclusion from the previous section can be further supported. One can see that the networks of the interviewed organisations in Figure 4 are heterogeneous. Although all the other actors cooperate with actors that have a variety of norms and values, only MSDC has a homogeneous network. Thus, Hypothesis 3, which proposes that the exchange of best practices can be connected to more homogeneous cooperation networks in terms of norms and values, is not verified. This finding can be explained by the previously examined fact that, in order to increase efficiency, the organisations consider cooperation with different kinds of partners to be more beneficial.

According to our results, a vital exchange of best practices among organisations on the national and international levels can be proven. Contrary to the prediction made in Hypothesis 3, the networks of actors are heterogeneous rather than homogeneous regarding the actor type and the norms and values of the organisation. If we include the superordinate networks in the assessment (not displayed in the figures but mentioned by the organisations), this is also the case for spatial reach.²¹ This contradicts the hypothesis that an exchange of best practices among the organisations can be connected to cooperation partners with similar characteristics. However, we can assume that the organisations' internal practices might converge when they copy best practices from each other, and this process would seem to extend across national borders.

21 The egocentric networks shown in Figure 4 tend to be homogeneous. National organisations seem to cooperate mainly with organisations that also work on the national level. Nevertheless, as analysed previously, they also cooperate with other, international networks, actively exchanging best practices with other organisations not named as direct cooperation partners. Therefore, this network appears to be more homogeneous than it actually is.

Figure 4: Asylum-related organisations in Malta showing their norms and values and cooperation partners



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014–16 using Visone.

5.3 State of the Integration Policy

After the elections in March 2013 and the inauguration of the Labour Party under Joseph Muscat, MSDC was established with the intention of setting up an institutional framework for dialogue with social actors and civil society. This Ministry has a wide array of tasks in various different areas, including consumer affairs, industrial and employment relations, civil liberties, equality and anti-discrimination policies, information and data protection, the volunteer and non-governmental sector and the integration of migrants (MSDC 2016). Under the leadership of the new government, MSDC set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee consisting of representatives from MSDC itself and from the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity, the Ministry for Education and Employment, the Ministry for Energy and Health and MHAS. The aim of this committee is to develop a national integration strategy (MSDC 2015).

In June 2015, two years after its establishment, the Inter-Ministerial Committee published this strategy (“Mind D Gap”), providing guidelines for a systematic approach to integration for developing national policies and bringing about institutional change. The integration strategy was based on surveys conducted via telephone or online with different parties such as the public, civil society organisations, trade and business organisations and governmental institutions and their representatives (MSDC 2015). This new strategy is criticised by various actors involved in the field of asylum and refugees. For example, Aditus argues that the integration strategy could not be seen as an extensive integration policy:

Last year [MSDC consulted] with groups on a future integration policy. In June they published [a] framework for an integration policy. It is [a] pretty framework, [but] more of a to-do list: there should be this and that and so on. But it is very sketchy and not really a policy in the full sense of the word. It is not what we would call a proper integration policy. [...] There are a number of EU-funded projects about integration, but as such I think that at the level of national government policy there is not really a programme (Aditus Foundation 2016).

The circumstances in Malta complicate the situation and hinder the implementation of the integration strategy. The ORC points out Malta’s role as a transit country:

They come to Malta by mistake, at least the boat persons do. If you speak of non-boat persons, it is a different issue, but if you speak of boat people, they ended up in Malta by mistake. Their dream is to leave Malta, to move on or to go to the United States. There is no real integration (ORC 2016).

In addition, there is a certain level of discord within the government: some delegates publicly express their antipathy to migrants and asylum seekers without being held accountable for these statements:

The issue is this: although you may have a president who is pro-migration, you tend to have governments or MPs, backbenchers, etc., who speak quite negatively about immigration and are openly racist on social media such as Facebook, but you don't get the government or the opposition telling them not to say that. They say it is the right of freedom of expression. It is a bit dangerous (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Those seeking protection often regard Malta as simply a stepping stone on the way to the European mainland and especially to the European north. Considering this fact, as well as the racist tendencies even within the Maltese government, one must recognise that the integration strategy has had to contend with difficult conditions from the outset. These problems also include its brief time in operation, with MSDC having been established only in 2013 and the integration strategy having been published in 2015. Therefore, one can reasonably assume that the strategy will further stabilise and develop as time goes by, and the mere establishment of this Ministry by the new government shows that integration has become an important issue of national policy.

5.4 The Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

Because CEAS applies to all EU member states, one can assume that it will eventually lead to changes in the practices of asylum- and refugee-related actors. To address our research question whether this political programme will in fact result in such practical changes, we must examine CEAS and its (amended) directives (for more information on this topic, see the first chapter of this book).

In September 2015, Malta, along with Greece, was urged by the European Commission to communicate measures taken nationally to fully implement the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU), which sets out common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection, and the Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU), which deals with access to reception conditions for asylum seekers while they wait for their applications to be examined (EU Parliament 2015). So far, they have not communicated the necessary implementation measures. In the case of Malta, this was due to further regulations regarding the use of detention

for asylum seekers, which was not in line with the stated requirements (UNHCR 2013).

There continue to be further practical challenges to implementing CEAS in Malta for the asylum system in general,

ranging from the cooperation difficulties between Member States in the responsibility allocation procedures to practical questions on the implementation of transfers on the actual access of asylum seekers to procedures for international protection (EU Parliament 2016).

Those responsible for these apparent difficulties include the EU member states, the national administration, the courts, the asylum seekers and the system itself (EU Parliament 2016). Concerning Malta, the interviewed organisations IOM and MHAS regard legal implementation of the CEAS directives to have been completed, resulting in practical changes to ensure compliance with the new EU obligations:

But I would say at the moment – if I am giving an example of Malta – what I see now is that there is an initiative from the government, from entities working in this field, to standardise according to the directives and regulations [of] the CEAS in order to have a standard (IOM 2016).

What I can say is that we have implemented [the directives] in full. Whether implementation has been equally effected in member states is something for the Commission to assess (MHAS 2016).

The Reception Conditions and Asylum Procedures Directives, which were heavily amended during the review process, had an especially severe impact on Malta's asylum regime (Aditus Foundation and JRS 2014). Moving forward with implementing CEAS in terms of granting international protection and improving access to rights and integration measures (Qualification Directive of CEAS), several initiatives were carried out over the past few years in order to improve the living conditions of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the reception centres. In addition, access to the labour market will now be granted after nine months (ECRE 2015: 46), which has been confirmed by MHAS:

As regards access to the labour market, as I said we try to help through employer ability training, and we also provide legal access to the labour market. [...] We [also] offer accommodations in Open Centres, and [the asylum seekers] have access to the employment market after a period of nine months, should they still be asylum seekers at that point (MHAS 2016).

As noted earlier, there have also been significant changes in the Maltese Detention Policy, most importantly concerning the maximum duration of detention of asylum seekers, which was decreased to nine months (ECRE

2015: 49). However, although the relevant EU Directives should have been implemented by now, there was common agreement that the practical implementation, in the sense of enforcing the legal standards, has not yet been fully implemented, because it is “*a process [of] getting there [...]*” (IOM 2016). IOM also states that especially now, in light of the refugee crisis, it is not easy to implement a general system: “*It is very difficult to think of implementing a general system in the current climate*” (IOM 2016). The government has been criticised for their cursory approach to implementing the Directives: “*The way [the government] implements directives and policies is very framework-like, very sketchy*” (Aditus Foundation 2016). Also, the ORC has insisted that as a first step in properly integrating the Directives into national law,

we must move towards a reasonable Common European Asylum System [and] have the legal tools completely in place, [because] before the rethinking [about the Dublin Regulation and the Qualification Directive] has been done on what is common in the European Union, you cannot then predict on the local level what is going to happen if you know that these things are unstable, are not strong (ORC 2016).

One can assume that CEAS has had an impact on the practical implementation of the new Directives in Malta and thus has already caused several practical changes; however, at this point it has not been implemented fully and still shows persistent gaps. Based on our results, we can answer our research question and confirm that CEAS does cause practical changes for the work of asylum- and refugee-related actors even though, owing to the relative newness of the Directives and the fact that CEAS and the Maltese asylum system are constantly developing, the work of asylum- and refugee-related actors has not as yet been influenced significantly.

However, one can expect that further changes will be forthcoming. On 4 May 2016, in response to the “migratory crisis” (EU Parliament 2014), the Commission took a first step towards a further (complete) revision of CEAS: an amended Dublin Regulation (“Dublin IV”), an amended EU-RODAC Regulation and a proposal for the establishment of a European Union Agency for Asylum (European Commission 2016). This reform sets out priorities for improving CEAS with the primary aim of strengthening the role of EASO and developing it into an agency that will facilitate the implementation of CEAS and improve its functioning (European Commission 2016).

5.5 Cooperation of Asylum-Related Organisations in Malta with EASO

With regard to the Maltese organisations cooperating with EASO as the actor assisting EU member states in the practical implementation of CEAS, we found that four of the six interviewed organisations – namely MHAS, the ORC, IOM and Aditus – are in contact with EASO, although their forms of contact differ. For some of them, such as MHAS and the ORC, EASO provides training sessions of the staff members:

Yeah, we do actually work with EASO. [...] As a matter of fact, [MHAS] has benefited from EASO training on several occasions. [...] We still cooperate with them on good terms, especially as regards participation in training initiatives, which are of course positive (MHAS 2016).

ORC also refers favourably to the EASO training programme:

I must say that the EASO training programme is helping a lot. [...] This week, four members of the staff attended trainings by EASO, on interviewing techniques and on exclusion as well. This week they are having face-to-face training. First, you get about 14 days of training over the internet and then in the last week you spend four days face to face with the experts. So this is also a great help (ORC 2016).

Other organisations report an exchange of data, for example in the form of “practical handbooks” (IOM 2016). Some international organisations such as IOM even cooperate with EASO by working together in hotspots for relocation:

We collaborate with EASO in relocation as one of the entities in the hotspots, with EASO, Frontex and the UNHCR (IOM 2016).

Aditus is monitoring EASO in a blog to address allegations that EASO lacks transparency (EASO Monitor Blog 2016) and also participates in its Consultative Forum, “the yearly conference which is open to NGO participation” (Aditus Foundation 2016).

The idea behind [the blog] was that when EASO was set up, it was very closed. There was not much information concerning what EASO was, what it was doing, what they were discussing. So the idea was more to monitor the actual organisation, trying to make it more transparent, trying to know what their discussions were about (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Aditus also stresses the fact that EASO is quite a young agency and is still evolving, implying that its role and its remit will eventually become clearer:

I would say maybe their role is getting clearer as time goes by. I think in the beginning they were also not really sure of their remit. The situation changes so rapidly, they are rushing off to the hotspots, doing this, doing that. [...] I think it is an evolving agency (Aditus Foundation 2016).

Even though the EASO headquarters is located in Malta, its influence is greater on the European level than on the Maltese asylum system: “*Despite the fact that EASO is based in Malta, it has more of an impact on a European level*” (IOM 2016).

As the above analysis shows, some organisations are in contact with EASO, but in various different ways. Therefore, the impact of EASO on the Maltese organisations should be evaluated further once its mandate and its remits are better clarified.

5.6 Criticism and Suggestions

The interviewed organisations were asked to suggest improvements in the asylum situation in Malta and Europe. With respect to the proposals on the European level, it is important to note that there is no common understanding of what the achievements of CEAS are supposed to mean. For example, ORC refers to such confusion:

When you are speaking about a CEAS, it does not boil down to just how they integrate or how they reside. [...] When [...] you say that in a certain country 80 per cent are given protection and speaking of the same country another member state says they are given only two per cent protection, there is something wrong (ORC 2016).

But MHAS has a different view:

Many people seem to have the impression that we will have effectively standardised the asylum system only when all member states start getting similar recognition rates. I too get this impression, but I think this is rubbish, mainly because each application is or should be ultimately assessed on its own merits (MHAS 2016).

The discrepancy between these two statements shows the lack of consensus concerning the achievements of CEAS. However, most interviewees, especially Aditus and the ORC (2016), criticise the Directives, above all the Dublin Regulation, and considered the lack of mutual trust between member states to be the result of the continued fragmentation of the system. This is regarded as one of the main weaknesses of CEAS. Especially regarding the asylum procedure and asylum applications, they agree that

CEAS, as well as the regulations, should be based more on solidarity instead of on individual responsibility alone:

Basically, everyone looking out for himself – I don't think that would be a solution. I think it can be improved in the sense of introducing a solidarity component (MHAS 2016).

ORC further demands a Dublin Regulation based on solidarity:

There will always be need for the qualifications directives to be recast, for the procedure directives to be recast. After the Dublin Regulation, Dublin II became Dublin III, and soon the need for recasting was felt. It is obvious because, more than Dublin II, Dublin III is based on responsibility and not on solidarity. At the moment all the European states are pushing towards solidarity, so the Dublin Regulation has to be scrapped completely. And that is why, with respect to the local states, I believe that before we have that, we must have something more common and so on. The Dublin Regulation must be changed (ORC 2016).

The organisations also request that the EU work more like a union, with all member states working together rather than separately in order to resolve the problems arising from the refugee crisis.

All interviewed actors desire further action on a European level in this field and feel that the future challenges and difficulties should be faced by all the member states together. For example, IOM states that

in general, [the EU member states should] come together and do what they said they would do, which is cooperate, support each other and act as one. [...] I would say that everybody understands that the situation is very hard, but dealing with it alone, as individual states, is only going to make it harder. We need to start working more as a union, as one whole, not as each state dealing with its own issues and putting its national interest ahead of the interests of the EU (IOM 2016).

MHAS stresses that it would be wrong for individual states to try to resolve the refugee crisis on their own: “*Basically, everyone for himself – I don't think that this would be a solution*” (MHAS 2016).

On a national level, almost all actors would like to see a “Two-Way Approach to Integration”. This means that the national government should facilitate access to the labour market and lower barriers to citizenship:

*The government [should] recognise the benefits of integration for the young up to citizenship for adults who have been here for a while, and according to the law their cases should be judged, they could be judged favourably, but we find that very few people are given citizenship (IOM 2016).
That's one of the main things [that should be changed]: access to the labour market (IOM 2016).*

[The government] needs to make plans to facilitate access to the labour market (MSCD 2016).

On the other hand, the Two-Way Approach to Integration means that the asylum seekers and refugees must gain

a certain understanding of the Maltese language and culture in order to make sure that they can integrate into a community more easily, for example, because they would also be able to provide services (IOM 2016).

In addition, asylum seekers and refugees in Malta should be better monitored, especially regarding insufficient access to the labour market. Many people are unable to work legally, which leads to a

massive black labour market in which people are not paid enough, they are maltreated [and] are made to work hours that are not in any way acceptable according to EU standards (IOM 2016).

Aditus states that one reason for this is that

a lot of the employers would not be willing to go through the process [and] to pay the national insurance (Aditus Foundation 2016).

This situation often forces asylum seekers and refugees to work

in the hotel industry or restaurants with bad working conditions or in even worse sectors, such as construction work, which is one of the most dangerous jobs (Aditus Foundation 2016).

6. Conclusion

Based on the results we have presented, we can conclude that the theory of neo-institutionalism can hardly be confirmed. Concerning Hypothesis 1, organisations tend to hire staff members only if the applicants have a certain academic background and expertise. Still, because no specific field of study is required for employment, it is not likely that the result will be a more harmonised way of working. One can conclude, however, that the level of professionalisation required could result in the increased professionalisation of the asylum system to which the organisations must adjust. Still, it is not possible to say this for certain based on our research results so far. Concerning Hypothesis 2, which refers to funding sources and the need for receiving organisations to adapt their behaviour to their donors' demands, none of the organisations indicated that they felt the need to adapt. In the years since the implementation of CEAS, we can conclude

that the asylum system in Malta, as affected by several adjustments to the CEAS, seems to be in a healthy state when it comes to its actors: the organisations fulfil different roles in the system and seem to value this heterogeneity. Furthermore, concerning Hypothesis 3, based on the concept of neo-institutionalism, one can see that there is a frequent exchange of best practices among the organisations. Recent reception strategies are a particularly good example of the attempt to institutionalise cooperation among the organisations. Moreover, organisational participation is now common in superordinate networks. Evidently cooperation and the exchange of best practices and expertise are increasing on the European level as well as on the national level. Nevertheless, contrary to our presumption, this does not mean that the networks are more homogeneous: within the interviewed organisations, diversity and different kinds of expertise are valued. Because we were able only to show some egocentric networks of asylum related organisations in Malta and the interviewed organisations represent only an extract of the entire Maltese cooperation network, further research would be needed to fully verify or falsify our hypotheses concerning neo-institutionalism. Possibly one could monitor the development of these networks over a longer period of time or could increase the number of interview partners to cover all of them.

Concerning Hypothesis 3, it is clear that CEAS has enhanced cooperation and is likely to formalise it further. Because standardisation of the asylum system in Europe, which is the main scope of CEAS, cannot be regarded as finalised yet, further adjustments will be needed in the future. The legal framework needs to be constantly adjusted to address the changing migration situation. Still, its implementation has already had a huge impact on national policy, for example, in the establishment of MSDC and in the change in the reception strategy. On this basis, one can assume that it has also had an impact on Maltese asylum-related actors. With increasing standardisation and professionalisation in the field across the EU, it is possible that, as mentioned before, CEAS will also force the organisations to become more professional. The extent of this impact will need to be assessed in the future.

With regard to EASO, which is the European institution entrusted with supporting the member states in implementing CEAS, contact with EASO could be confirmed for four of our six interview partners: this contact occurs in the form of training sessions, exchange of data material and work cooperation. Therefore, EASO's influence on the asylum-related actors in Malta is evident, but so far this influence has been minimal for most orga-

nisations and, if it has occurred at all, is hardly visible. Further cooperation and greater influence might result if the mandate and the EASO's position become clearer with time — or if Malta should require increasing support in the future in response to rising numbers of arrivals. Although based in Malta, EASO currently influences actors mainly on the European level, which then filters down to the national level.

On the national level, although recently an integration policy was developed soon after the new government had set up a Ministry responsible for integration, it still needs to be improved. There are difficulties with access to the labour market, legal aid and information policy. Further improvements are about to be achieved through an increasing dialogue between different actors.

All in all, the asylum system even in the small country of Malta is under a lot of pressure, and the organisations need to keep adapting to new challenges and different needs owing to changing migrant groups and changing policies. Cooperation among the different actors operating in this field is facilitating the work required by the quickly changing situation (and vice versa) in order to cope with the day-to-day requirements. As cooperation improves – not only among the organisations but also among state actors as part of CEAS – the asylum system might improve as well.

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Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically:

Aditus Foundation

EASO

IOM

MHAS

MSCD

NCPE

ORC

Italy Report

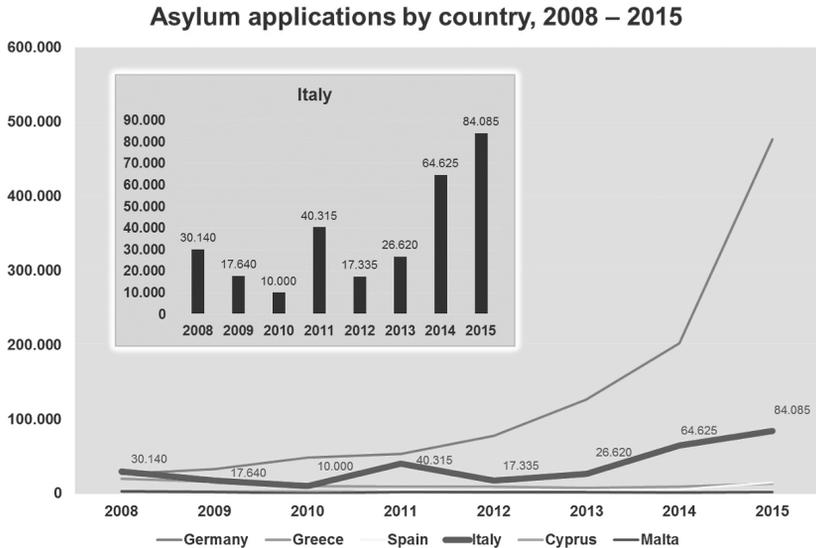
Steffen Letmathe, Timo Kemp, Mats Schulte, Davide Scotti

1. Introduction

With a population of roughly 62,5 million and a size of 301,340 km², Italy is, after Germany, France and the United Kingdom, one of Europe's most densely populated countries – here live 207 people per km² (Statista 2016a; Statista 2016b; World Bank 2016). Being one of the largest national economy in the Euro Zone, Italy's GDP was worth 29, 867 billion US dollars in 2015 (Statista 2016c). Countries unemployment rate amounted to 11,4 % in July 2016 (Statista 2016d). This democratic republic is ruled by the Democratic Party (PD), of which Sergio Mattarella was elected President of Italy in January 2015 (Deloy 2015: 1). Located in the southern part of Europe, Italy borders the EU member states France, Austria and Slovenia, and its only direct land border to a non-EU state is with Switzerland. It is important to note that Italy's land borders cover a length of only about 1,800 km (CIA 2016a), whereas the shoreline bordering the Mediterranean covers a length of about 7,600 km (CIA 2016b). This simple fact explains the large number of people seeking protection who arrive by boat.

The Lampedusa tragedy in October 2013, in which nearly 400 people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, brought Italy and its asylum policy to the attention of the European public. Since then, more than 6,000 people have lost their lives while trying to reach the shores of Italy via the Central Mediterranean route, which is considered by far the most dangerous path to the EU (IOM 2016).

Figure 1: Asylum applications by country, 2008–15



Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2015b).

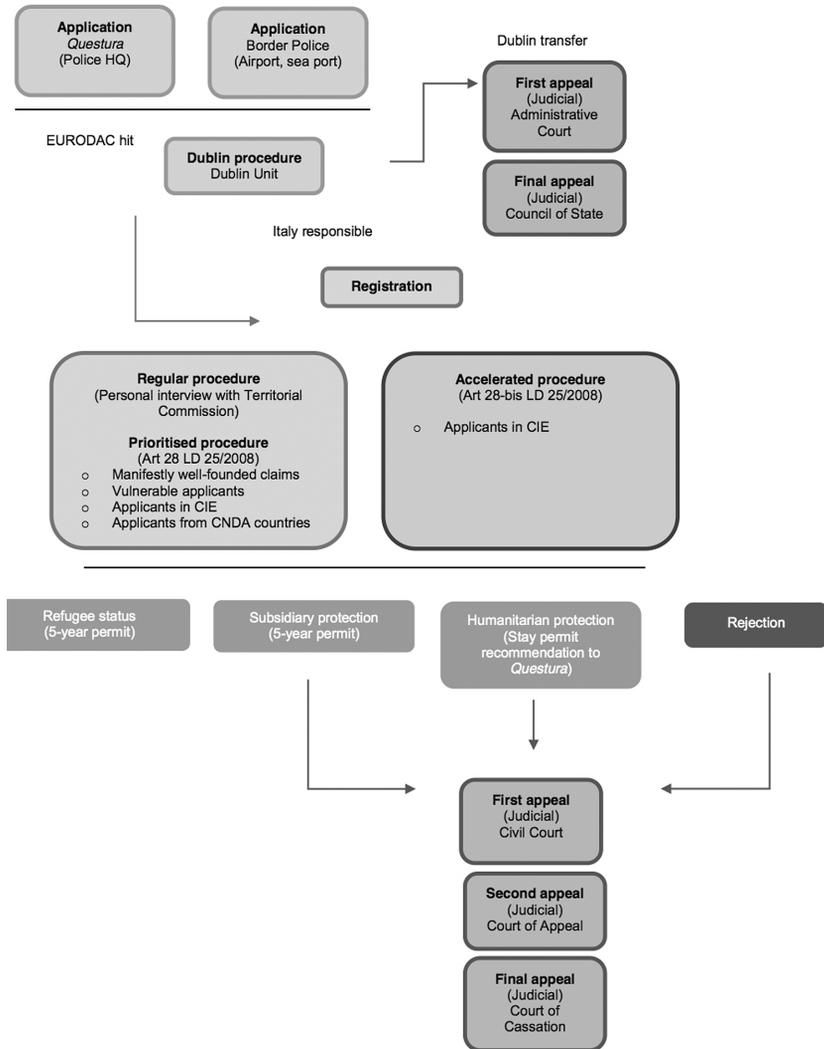
Figure 1 shows that 84,085 people applied for asylum in Italy in 2015 (Eurostat 2015c). In the first half of 2016 there already has been 49,375 first-time asylum applications (Eurostat 2016a). With 813 asylum applications per million inhabitants in the first half of 2016, the rate for Italy is far above the numbers of many other European countries (Eurostat 2016b). Although only 15 % of migrants took the Central Mediterranean route in 2015, 77 % of all recorded migrant fatalities occurred there (IOM 2016). In the aftermath of the Lampedusa tragedy, the Italian government responded by initiating the Search and Rescue (SAR) operation Mare Nostrum. Until it was shut down in October 2014, Mare Nostrum saved the lives of about 150,000 migrants. After more than 1,200 people had drowned in April 2014, Operation Triton, led by Frontex, was established in November 2014. After that, investments in Operation Triton increased in order to improve the rescue mission and to avoid further tragedies (ECRE 2015: 22).

Table 1: Applications and granting of protection status at first instance, January–September 2015

	Applicants in 2015	Pending applications in 2015	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection	Rejection ¹	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Hum. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	59,165	50,460	2,480	6,975	10,330	24,240	5.6%	15.9%	23.4%	55.2%
Breakdown by countries of origin of the total numbers										
Nigeria	12,530	10,975	225	685	1,570	5,135	2.9%	9%	20.7%	67.4%
Gambia	6,365	5,365	170	130	1,770	3,480	3%	2.3%	31.8%	62.9%
Pakistan	5,830	5,360	270	1,090	940	2,690	5.4%	21.8%	18.8%	54%
Senegal	4,870	3,830	65	105	815	2,130	2%	3.2%	28.1%	66.4%
Bangladesh	4,380	4,450	80	70	000	1,985	2.9%	2.5%	21.8%	72.8%
Mali	4,260	4,040	45	445	1,400	3,940	0.8%	7.6%	24%	67.6%
Afghanistan	2,860	2,045	215	2,005	95	70	9%	84%	4%	3%
Ghana	2,455	2,260	20	40	425	1,030	1.3%	2.6%	28%	68.1%
Côte d'Ivoire	2,390	1,925	40	170	405	695	3%	13%	30.9%	53.1%
Guinea	1,185	995	20	50	320	260	3.1%	7.7%	49.2%	40%
Syria	365	160	175	40	0	30	71.4%	16.3%	0%	17.3%
Eritrea	265	190	210	190	15	60	44.2%	40%	3.1%	12.7%
Somalia	550	340	125	595	15	40	16.1%	76.7%	1.9%	5.3%
Kosovo	210	190	0	20	5	35	0%	33.3%	8.3%	58.4%

Source: ECRE (2015: 6).

Figure 2: The asylum process in Italy



Source: ECRE (2015: 16).

People trying to enter Italy via the regular asylum procedure often face many obstacles, such as originating from what is regarded as a secure country and being considered an economic migrant. In 2015 (January through September), 44,8% of the asylum seekers were given some type

of international protection in Italy – a relatively low proportion compared with the EU-28 average (52%) – and thus 55,2% of the applications were rejected (see Table 1). One of the reasons for this relatively low protection rate is the composition of the asylum seekers and their countries of origin (see Table 1). About 49 % of the asylum seekers who reached Italy in 2015 came from Nigeria, the Gambia, Pakistan and Senegal, and many were labelled economic migrants and thus seen as not being in need of protection by the international community (ECRE 2015: 6; Eurostat 2016c).

In the first half of 2016 total recognition rate of the first-time asylum applications in Italy was about 36 %, subsidiary protection rate amounted to 13 % and refugee rate constituted 5 % (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). In the same period of time 47,505 asylum decisions were made in Italy in total, the majority (30,510) were negative ones (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e).

Figure 2 provides a brief overview of the asylum procedure in Italy. The first step after the application for asylum is to determine, based on the Dublin Regulation, which country is responsible for reviewing the application. Applicants who have already applied for asylum in another country will be transferred there. In the case of a first-time application, the registration process will begin. Applicants who possess official documents will undergo the regular registration procedure; all others will need to be identified by one of Italy's Identification and Expulsion Centres (Centri di identificazione ed espulsione, CIE). After the migrant's identity has been confirmed, a decision will be made regarding that person's protection status (ECRE 2015: 16).¹

Three main state institutions are responsible for the Italian reception system. One is Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo (CARA), which runs reception centres where asylum seekers stay for up to one month after their arrival and where their first request for asylum is lodged. The second is the Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (SPRAR) – the system of protection for asylum seekers and refugees – which handles second-line reception and has a capacity of 21,500 places in several small reception centres throughout Italy where they provide accommodation and a variety of integration services (e.g. language courses). The third is CIE, which tries to confirm the identity of migrants who lack

1 For more information concerning the Italian asylum system, see: AIDA Country Report: Italy 2015 (ECRE 2015: 16).

documents and detains those who are awaiting expulsion; CIE provides no services for recognised refugees (ECRE 2015: 16).

The main change in the Italian reception system over the past few years has been the establishment of hotspots within the European asylum system – that is, on-shore reception centres that are responsible for initially receiving asylum seekers, providing them with relevant information and determining their identities. After the limitations of the Dublin II Regulation became clear, and as the growing influx of people seeking protection became increasingly challenging in countries at the periphery of the EU, relocation centres were introduced on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea as a way of distributing these migrants throughout Europe. These centres are run by EU agencies such as EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust in co-operation with the national authorities. Of the planned six hotspots in Italy, only four are currently in operation. The centre in Lampedusa began operation on 21 September 2015; the other three are located on the shores of Sicily in the cities of Trapani, Pozzallo and Porto Empedocle. From the outset until 15 December 2015, a total of 144 people have been relocated from Italy to other countries (ECRE 2015: 24–26).

The main focus of the research described in this chapter is on analysing the networks of organisations that deal with asylum- and refugee-related topics and on testing the theoretical elements of neo-institutionalism with our data. The chapter begins with a discussion of the current state of the research and the research questions posed. We then proceed to present the results of our data collection. The chapter closes with a summary of our conclusions.

2. Current State of Research

In preparation for our research, we searched for literature to gain an overview of the configuration of the cooperation networks of Italian organisations in the field of asylum and refuge. Although the evolution, functionality and state of the European asylum regime have been well explored scientifically (Trianadafyllidou: 2016; Armstrong: 2016; Kasperek: 2016; Trauner: 2016; Servent/Trauner: 2014; Thielemann: 2012; Klepp: 2010), the role of non-state actors and their relation to governmental and inter-governmental organisations remains somewhat of a ‘black box’. However, several non-scientific publications from governmental and non-govern-

mental actors provided additional information about the Italian organisations' networks and helped us gain some insights into their structure.

The main source on which we relied was the AIDA Country Report: Italy (ECRE 2014, 2015, 2016), written by an expert from the Italian Refugee Council (Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati, CIR) and edited by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). In this chapter, we provide a detailed overview of the Italian asylum system and stress the important role of NGOs in providing information to asylum seekers (Ibid.: 44 ff.). These organisations also perform many tasks that the state would be unable to properly fulfil in the areas of reception (Ibid.: 60 ff.), medical aid (Ibid.: 82 ff.), integration measures (Ibid.: 80 f.) and rescue at sea (RAS) (Ibid.: 23).

Another important sources for our research were the activity reports of the organisations, which are frequently made available to the public.² In these reports we found information about the specific actions of the individual organisations, their features (e.g. spatial reach, driving norms and values) and their connections with other organisations, as well as the state of the asylum system as a whole. Pro Asyl (2011), for example, reported on their research trip to Rome and Turin and described the situation of asylum seekers, irregular migrants, and the crucial role of NGOs in meeting their basic needs. Amnesty International (2015) and European agencies such as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published reports about the situation in the Mediterranean Sea (FRA 2014a, b). In addition, there are a variety of UNHCR reports on the Italian situation in the form of recommendation papers (UNHCR 2013) and general statistical overviews (UNHCR 2016a, b). The UNHCR has also provided detailed information through the Praesidium Project, which they initiated themselves and in which governmental and non-governmental actors cooperated in RAS operations (UNHCR 2009).

Also relevant to our understanding of the current situation in Italy and the degree to which the asylum system has been implemented there were daily news reports and analyses provided by media, such as newspapers, journalists and activists' blogs. Despite the lack of scientific sources, particularly the ones listed above, these outlets represented essential sources

2 Examples include: Activity Report 2016, Sovereign Military Order of Malta; Rapporto annuale SPRAR. Atlante SPRAR 2015" Ministero dell'Interno, Cittalia, ANCI 2015; "Accogliere: la vera emergenza" LasciateCIEntrare 2016; "Voci Sospese", SenzaConfine, A Buon Diritto 2013.

of information for our research.³ Of course, in order to remain objective and scientific, one must take into account the possible biases of some media reports and organisations.

Obviously, a final but no less important source of information have been the results of previous rounds of the MAREM project. We have tried to maintain continuity with the work done by all the different research teams (for example using the data on networks collected in 2014 and 2015) and to contribute to the research by attempting to fill, at least in part, the existing research gap.

3. Research Questions

A preliminary review of the literature revealed a gap in the research concerning networks of asylum-related organisations in Italy and in Europe. The MAREM project aims to fill this research gap. Our study focused on analysing two organisational networks⁴ related to the Italian asylum system, as well as on the application of several hypotheses to these networks based on the theory of neo-institutionalism and the concept of isomorphism (for a definition of these terms and additional information on them, see the first chapter of this book).

The first network involved organisations that deal with asylum seekers and refugees (asylum- and refugee-related organisations). Most of these organisations focus on migration-related issues in general, regardless of individual migrants' legal status. The following question provided the framework for the part of the MAREM project that concerns Italy: *What role do the cooperation networks of asylum- and refugee-related organisations play in the national asylum system and the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in Italy?*

The second network included organisations involved in rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea (RAS-related organisations). These groups are committed to safeguarding lives according to the law of the sea regard-

3 Examples include <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.de>, <http://dirittiefrontiere.blogspot.de>, <http://www.meltingpot.org>.

4 Here we refer to the whole network of asylum-related organisations in Italy, although in our study we focused on the egocentric networks of the organisations we interviewed and therefore can show only parts of the whole network (for additional information on egocentric and whole networks see the first chapter of this book).

less of the status of those who are rescued. Concerning this network, the research question was as follows: *What role do the cooperation networks of RAS-related organisations in Italy play in rescue-at-sea operations?*

In addition, we applied the theory of neo-institutionalism to the networks of organisations in the European countries. This theory is used as a guide in the analysis of organisational networks, and the analysis was also intended to test some elements of this theory.

4. Introduction

After reviewing the current situation in Italy based on information obtained from the websites of several asylum- and refugee-related organisations and from the national and international press (e.g. www.internazionale.it, www.lastampa.it, www.ilfattoquotidiano.it, www.bbc.com and www.theguardian.com), we adopted three theses of neo-institutionalism in order to analyse the data we collected. Therefore, we established hypotheses based on each of these theses for each network we studied – that is, the asylum- and refugee-related and RAS-related organisational networks.

Mimetic Isomorphism

The first thesis concerns mimetic isomorphism (for additional information on this term, see the first chapter of this book). We focused on the uncertainty characterizing the work field conditions that can be important for isomorphic processes. Uncertainty is a common feature of both the RAS-related and the asylum- and refugee-related organisations; it is determined by a variety of factors depending on the specific missions of the organisations. With regard to the asylum- and refugee-related organisations, this uncertainty consists in the inability of the state to handle the enormous number of migrants arriving in Italy and the resulting difficulties in applying CEAS provisions;⁵ when one examines RAS-related organisations, uncertainty is an intrinsic feature of their work field because they operate in emergency situations. Therefore, uncertainty in both cases seems to be a

5 See <http://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2015/08/28/diritto-asilo-italia>.

direct consequence of the ways in which the state deals with these issues, namely providing migrants with the necessary support on land and rescuing them at sea. Regardless of the reasons underlying state policies and actions, which are difficult to identify objectively, it is undeniable that the government massively relies, wittingly or not, on these organisations' activities in order to implement the national asylum system and to provide effective rescue operations.⁶ Based on these considerations, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: The inability of the state to provide proper support to asylum seekers and migrants forces asylum- and refugee-related NGOs to fill the gaps in the system, adopting practices already established by other organisations working in the same field.

Hypothesis 2a: The high degree of uncertainty related to rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea triggered the action of RAS-related organisations in support of the governmental organisations, and the emergency situation could have led the organisations to imitate established practices, which would indicate isomorphism in their *modus operandi*.

Coercive Isomorphism

The second thesis concerns coercive isomorphism (see the first chapter of this book). We focused on the relationship between the organisations and the state agencies as an indicator of isomorphism between organisations, which can represent an external constraint on activities carried out by the organisations. From the beginning of our research, it was clear that the relationship between the organisations and the state is a fundamental feature of each organisation, because it appears to be extremely relevant in determining their activities and development. This relationship can differ from organisation to organisation depending on their specific mission, especially in terms of the general distinction between asylum- and refugee-related and RAS-related organisations. Application of the theoretical paradigm of coercive isomorphism to the Italian situation is an effective way to understand the roles of the state and of the organisations both in the national asylum system and in rescue operations and how these roles are influenced

6 For a more precise idea about the significance of NGOs' contributions, see the activity reports of the organisations we interviewed, which are available online and some of which are included in the list of references.

by specific aspects of the relationship between each organisation and the state. In consideration of this, we established the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1b: Since most of the asylum- and refugee-related organisations deal mainly with irregular migrants and have to face deficiencies in and breaches of the national asylum system, a major part of their activity does not involve cooperation with state agencies. On the contrary, their activities aim to fill the gaps left by the state. Therefore, one can expect very few or no similarities in their structures and ways of working owing to the lack of transactions with state agencies.

Hypothesis 2b: Because organisations involved in RAS interact closely with state agencies, this transaction leads to isomorphism among them.

Normative Isomorphism

The third thesis concerns normative isomorphism (see the first chapter of this book). We focused on the personnel composition of the organisations which can be relevant for isomorphism, because isomorphism among organisations can be determined by homogeneity in the educational background and professionalisation of the organisations' members. By analysing the composition of the sample of organisations we interviewed in Rome, we could distinguish between those that required professional workers and those that did not. For this differentiation, it did not matter whether or not the personnel were paid. This characteristic depends on the organisation's mission, because professionals are needed in either case to provide certain services such as medical or legal assistance. However, certain tasks (e.g. supporting migrants in their daily life) can be undertaken by non-professionals without a specific educational background. Taking this into account, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1c: Because the personnel composition can depend on the specific mission of each asylum- and refugee-related organisation, one can expect to identify isomorphism owing to homogeneity in members' educational background among organisations that share the same mission and whose mission requires professional work to be accomplished.

Hypothesis 2c: Because rescue operations require strict procedures and competences in specific fields, such as navigation and emergency medicine, isomorphism among organisations involved in RAS is expected to be linked to the degree of homogeneity in the members' professionalisation.

5. Data

During our field research in Rome in March 2016, we conducted semi-structured expert interviews with nine organisations in order to gain a deeper insight into the organisational field and the cooperation of asylum- and refugee-related organisations in Italy. Interactions between asylum- and refugee-related organisations and their networks were of central interest because we expect organisations to act and develop their structures and strategies in keeping with their perceived organisational field and the corresponding field expectations.

We categorised the organisations according to five different dimensions based on their websites and self-descriptions in documents and during the interviews. All the organisations were analysed based on the following criteria:

- (1) their *actor type* (official executive actor, civil society non-governmental organisation [NGO], intergovernmental organisation);
- (2) their field of action and legitimation and *spatial reach* (local/regional, national, international/transnational/European/global levels);
- (3) their *driving norms and values* (religious, political, human rights oriented, objectivity);
- (4) the *main issues* they deal with (legal or social assistance, advocacy, etc.);
- (5) their *resources* (private, public or mixed).

Table 2 gives an overview of the interviewed organisations and their main characteristics.

Table 2: Characteristics of the interviewed organisations in Italy

Name	Type	Spatial Reach	Driving norms	Main issues	Resources
A Buon Diritto	NGO	National	Human Rights	Legal Aid, Lobbying	Private
Mediterranean Hope	NGO	National	Religious	Help Services	Mixed
Medicina Solidale	NGO	Local	Human Rights	Medical Aid	Mixed
CISOM	Sovereign state	International	Religious	Asylum seekers and refugees	Public
CIR	NGO	National	Human Rights	Legal Aid, Lobbying	Public

Name	Type	Spatial Reach	Driving norms	Main issues	Resources
Baobab Experience	NGO	Local	Human Rights	Help Services	Private
SenzaConfine	NGO	National	Human Rights	Legal Aid	Private
Carta di Roma	NGO	National	Human Rights	Media	Mixed

Source: Adapted from website and document analyses and expert interviews conducted as part of the MAREM project 2016.

With one exception, all the organisations are located in Rome. Mediterranean Hope was the only organisation not located in Rome, but it operates in Sicily and Lampedusa, so the interview was conducted via Skype. Although the overwhelming majority of the organisations are NGOs, two of them could not be characterised as either an NGO or a governmental or intergovernmental actor. *LasciateCIEntrare* (“Let us in”) does not have legal status as an organisation but could be considered a campaign that is supported by several NGOs. As part of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, *Corpo Italiano di Soccorso dell’Ordine di Malta (CISOM)* is a sovereign subject of international law.

Moreover, we asked all interviewed organisations to identify their most important cooperation partners. Combining the analysis of each organisation’s characteristics and the structure of its cooperation network, we searched for cooperation patterns and tendencies toward isomorphism based on the criteria mentioned previously (i.e. actor type, spatial reach, driving norms, main issues and resources). To measure isomorphism, we used the concept of homophily (McPherson et al 2001), which postulates a higher probability of ties between actors who are similar to each other in the relevant dimensions, as well as the network diversity index developed by Baum et al. (2000).⁷

7 The egocentric network diversity index (see Baum et al. 2000: 277) calculates diversity as 1 minus the sum of the squared proportions of the categories in the network divided by the total number of cooperation partners: $ND = (1 - (\text{Proportion of category 1 in network})^2 + (\text{Proportion of the category 2 in the network})^2 + \dots + (\text{Proportion of last represented category in network})^2)$. Network size is the number of the ties of the regarded actor. In our example, it is the number of the main cooperation partners of the interviewed organisation. The values range between 0 and 1, with values closer to 0 showing less network diversity and values closer to 1 showing more network diversity.

6. Results

Network Analysis

In this section we present the results of our network analysis. As a first step, we describe the interviewed organisations to provide an overview of their main characteristics. Subsequently, we will describe the egos' cooperation networks (it means: the cooperation networks of the regarded actors/organisations) with respect to the five analytical dimensions.

For the most part, the spatial reach of the interviewed organisations was national. Six have a national field of action and legitimation, and two (Medicina Solidale and Baobab Experience) act locally; only CISOM operates on the international level. Concerning the driving norms, the category of human rights was dominant for seven of the organisations, whereas two (Mediterranean Hope and CISOM) follow primarily religious values. Regarding the main issues that the organisations deal with, a very broad spectrum of tasks was covered. Baobab Experience and Mediterranean Hope organise multiple assistance services for migrants (i.e. food, clothing and basic information), and Medicina Solidale offers free medical aid to irregular migrants. CISOM is active in SAR at sea operations, while Carta di Roma provides asylum- and refugee-related data and information to journalists in an attempt to raise awareness within the society by means of objective media information. Three organisations (SenzaConfine, A Buon Diritto and CIR) offer legal aid to migrants and asylum seekers. SenzaConfine specialises in this issue, and A Buon Diritto and CIR are also strongly involved in lobbying to improve the asylum system on the national and European levels. As the largest Italian asylum- and refugee-related organisation, CIR is also running several SPRAR accommodation centres throughout Italy. The organisations' funding characteristics are quite heterogeneous. Whereas four of the groups finance their work using private donations alone, CIR and CISOM depend solely on public financial sources, and the resources for three of the organisations (Mediterranean Hope, Medicina Solidale and Carta di Roma) have mixed origins.

During the interviews, we asked the interviewees to name their organisations' cooperation partners and to describe the nature of their cooperation. The following section presents the results of the descriptive analysis

of their egocentric (or ego⁸) networks. Table 3 gives an overview of the size of these networks and indicates their composition and diversity with respect to actor type.

The average number of cooperation partners in a network is about 15, with a minimum of 6 (Mediterranean Hope) and a maximum of 19 (CIR, Carta di Roma and A Buon Diritto). With the exception of Mediterranean Hope, which cooperates mostly with church-related organisations, the majority of the links for all the other organisations are with NGOs. Nevertheless, all the organisations other than SenzaConfine and Mediterranean Hope have some connections to governmental and/or intergovernmental actors, and these connections do not necessarily consist of cooperative relationships. On the other hand, scientific organisations seemed to play a minor role within the analysed egocentric networks - only CIR mentioned four such organisations as cooperation partners.

As can be seen in Table 3, the average value of network diversity was 0.033, which indicates that the principle of homophily does not apply in most of the cases we studied. Since the average diversity in the case of a network with 15 cooperation partners and 3 representatives in each of the categories would be 0.013, the average diversity of networks concerning the actor type in Italy could be interpreted as being high. Instead of homophily, one can see more elements of complementarity within the networks. There were also big differences between the interviewed organisations: whereas SenzaConfine had ties only with other NGOs, the level of network diversity of CISOM (0.066) and of Mediterranean Hope (0.074) was quite high.

8 The regarded actor.

Table 3: Characteristics of the egocentric cooperation networks with regard to actor type

Ego	Network size	NGO	GO	IGO	SO	Others	Network diversity
A Buon Diritto	19	12	4	2	0	1	0.029
Baobab Experience	19	13	1	0	0	5	0.024
Carta di Roma	19	14	1	2	0	2	0.022
CIR	19	11	2	1	4	1	0.025
CISOM	9	5	2	2	0	0	0.066
Mediterranean Hope	6	2	0	0	0	4	0.074
SenzaConfine	12	12	0	0	0	0	0
Average	15.43	10.57	1.43	1	0.67	1.86	0.033

Source: Adapted from website and document analyses and expert interviews conducted as part of the MAREM project 2016.

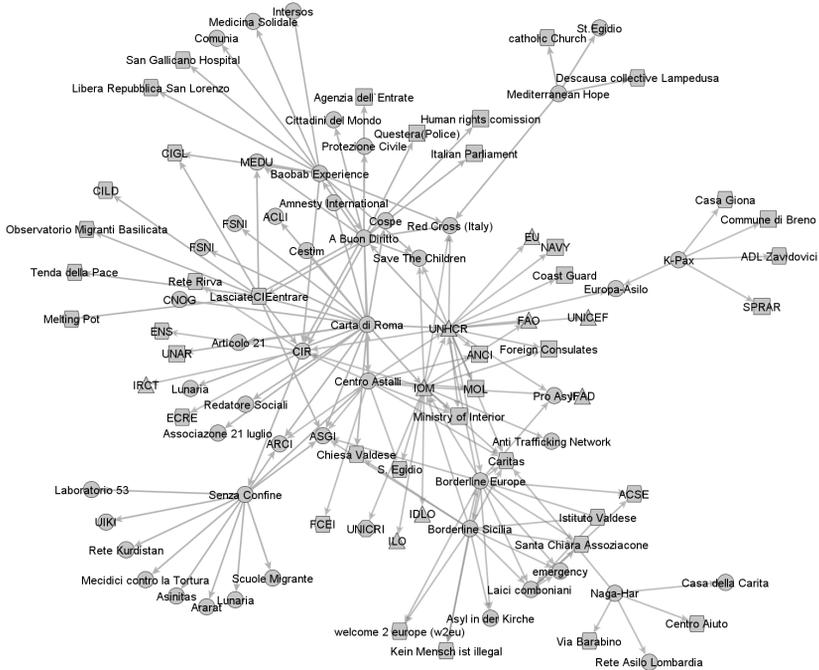
If we analyse the cooperation networks in more detail and combine them with the issues that the organisations deal with, they seem to follow a pattern: organisations that provide services for migrants tend to cooperate with other NGOs, whereas church-related organisations cooperate more with other religious organisations and churches. Instead, organisations that are involved in advocacy and lobbying as well as in RAS operations have a much higher level of network diversity. As one can see in the case of A Buon Diritto, this pattern is also valid for organisations that work on different issues at the same time. When they cooperate with other organisations in lobbying, they work only with governmental or intergovernmental actors, but when they provide services directly to migrants, they cooperate solely with NGOs.

If we extend the analysis to all the data that have been collected since the beginning of the MAREM project (i.e. including data from 2014 and 2015 as well), the results are quite similar to those presented here: NGOs tend to cooperate with other NGOs, but there are a lot of exceptions. The network⁹ consists of 113 actors, 57 of which are NGOs, 15 governmental executive actors, 9 intergovernmental organisations and 5 scientific organisations. Twenty-seven actors could not be classified within the existing

9 The network visualisation connects the different egocentric networks of the organisations we interviewed during the MAREM project from 2014 through 2016. It was not the research aim to reconstruct the whole network, so the illustrations shown here represent only parts of the network.

categories. Figure 3 is a visualisation of the networks focusing on actor type, as generated by means of the software Visone.

Figure 3: Asylum related organisations in Italy, their actor types and cooperation, 2014–16



Source: Adapted from website and document analyses and expert interviews conducted as part of the MAREM project 2016.

The cooperation networks of intergovernmental organisations in particular, such as UNHCR and IOM, are also worth considering. With 21 cooperation partners, UNHCR has the largest egocentric network among the interviewed organisations. The egocentric network of UNHCR consists of 21 organisations, of which 10 are NGOs, 7 are GOs and 3 are IGOs; hence, its network diversity value is above average (0.036). As part of the Territorial Commission and as initiator and coordinator of the Tavolo Asi-

lo¹⁰ (the Italian asylum round table), the UNHCR plays an important role as a mediator between governmental and non-governmental actors in the asylum system in Italy.

With regard to the driving norms, human rights is dominant not only for most of the cooperation partners of the interviewed organisations, regardless of whether or not they are promoting human rights themselves, but also for the actors that foremost follow religious values. However, the network diversity of Mediterranean Hope and CISOM is above average, which indicates a certain degree of isomorphism. Table 4 gives an overview of egocentric networks in relation to their driving norms.

Table 4: Characteristics of the cooperation networks with regard to their driving norms

Ego	Network size	Human rights	Political	Religious	Objectivity	Others	Network diversity
A Buon Diritto	19	13	4	2	0	0	0.025
Baobab Experience	18	10	7	1	0	0	0.03
Carta di Roma	19	11	1	3	2	2	0.032
CIR	24	13	2	5	4	0	0.026
CISOM	9	5	2	2	0	0	0.066
Mediterranean Hope	7	3	0	3	0	1	0.102
SenzaConfine	12	6	4	1	1	0	0.052
Average	15.43	8.57	2.86	2.43	1	0.75	0.041

Source: Adapted from website and document analyses and expert interviews conducted as part of the MAREM project 2016.

On average, the majority of the cooperation partners (8.57) promote human rights, whereas only 2.86 and 2.43 follow political and religious values, respectively. Objectivity is the dominant value for only one organisation, and only 0.75 have other driving norms. Thus, the average network diversity is 0.041. The organisations cooperation partners, values and norms, are visualised in Figure 4.

10 Tavolo Asilo is an Italian network of asylum- and refugee-related organisations and is devoted to lobbying.

and 3 are active only on the local level. Overall network diversity has a value of 0.04, on the same level as for the driving norms. As the only local organisations that we interviewed, the Baobab Experience (0.037) and Mediterranean Hope (0.082) have much higher network diversity, although Baobab Experience is the only organisation with the majority of cooperation partners on the local level. Also, CISOM, as the only organisation that is active on an international level, has an above-average network diversity value (0.049).

Within the reconstructed part of the whole network, the distribution is equal in terms of its spatial reach. Among 41 organisations in the network visualisation, the national level is overrepresented, but 39 organisations are active internationally and 33 locally. Since the national and international organisations have, on average, bigger networks and more ties to other organisations, the local organisations appear at the outer edges of Figure 5. Nonetheless, they play an important role in the asylum system, because they are in direct contact with the migrants and facilitate integration and social welfare.

Table 5: Characteristics of the cooperation networks in terms of spatial reach

Ego	Network size	Local	National	International	Network diversity
A Buon Diritto	19	4	10	5	0.032
Baobab Experience	18	7	5	6	0.037
Carta di Roma	19	0	16	3	0.014
CIR	24	4	12	8	0.026
CISOM	9	0	3	6	0.049
Mediterranean Hope	7	1	2	4	0.082
SenzaConfine	12	4	7	1	0.045
Average	15.43	2.86	7.86	4.71	0.04

Source: Adapted from website and document analyses and expert interviews conducted as part of the MAREM project 2016.

operate in this field (CISOM 2016) and play the leading role in coordinating these operations because the state provides an essential portion of the resources. According to the AIDA Country Report, Triton, for example, operates on a monthly budget of €2.9 million and coordinates the deployment of three open-sea patrol vessels, two coastal patrol boats, two coastal patrol vessels, two aircraft and one helicopter in the Central Mediterranean (ECRE 2015: 22).

In this work field, the hierarchical structures of state organisations are fundamental. The NGOs must therefore work within the structure of the GOs and, if necessary, adapt to them, as mentioned by CISOM in the March 2016 interview: *“We have to adjust to the hierarchical structure of the Navy, because we join them in the missions using their structures and means.”* In RAS operations, the NGOs support the GOs, sending their staff, such as physicians, nurses and rescuers, to the operational field, while the GOs support the operations in terms of logistics and provide the boats and helicopters. For example, in 2015, CISOM deployed 102 doctors, 66 nurses, 73 volunteers and 12 logisticians who worked with the authorities in charge of rescue operations for migrants in the Strait of Sicily, namely the Coast Guard and the Navy. The search and rescue (SAR) operations comprised the following (CISOM 2015: 1): 491 SAR operations, 53,712 migrants rescued, 800 therapies administered, 72 urgent transfers, and 25 helicopter transfers.

Furthermore, according to CISOM, cooperation among the organisations in RAS is defined by formal agreements: *“We have agreements with the state administration (protocolli d’intesa) and agreements with Guardia Costiera and Guardia di Finanza (protocolli operativi) [...] With regard to organisations other than state ones, we have partnership agreements (protocolli d’intesa) to define our cooperation”* (CISOM 2015).

CISOM also emphasised that many cooperation partnerships, especially on shore, are informal and are determined by practical issues related mostly to emergency situations: *“We cooperate [in] the field with anybody who is involved in the specific emergency situation we face, such as MSF, IOM, UNHCR, [so there is] no need for a[n official] partnership. At the POS [punti di sbarco, or disembarkation points], we work with Caritas, Croce Rossa and Misericordia”* (CISOM 2015).

Neo-institutionalism

Mimetic Isomorphism

Regarding the first two hypotheses concerning the mimetic isomorphism theoretical paradigm (see Hypotheses 1a and 2a), the expert interviews were analysed to identify a connection between the uncertainty that characterises the field of action of each organisation and the development of the organisations either through imitating other organisations' effective practises or as models for other organisations. Depending on the network under study and the specific task of the organisations involved, the way each organisation worked was expected to be conditioned by other organisations' ways of working through different processes.

During the expert interviews, the representatives of almost all the organisations – Baobab Experience, CISOM, SenzaConfine, A Buon Diritto, Medicina Solidale, LasciateCIEntrare and Mediterranean Hope (2016) – pointed out a lack of governmental involvement, which leaves organisations to find their own way in dealing with migrants' issues in general and those related to asylum seekers and refugees in particular. As will be demonstrated in this section, the main function of asylum- and refugee-related organisations is to fill the gaps in the asylum system left by the state. The organisations' work is necessary for meeting the migrants' needs, especially in Rome; however, sometimes their work is not sufficient. Their activities mainly involve services they believe migrants should have access to, either because of their asylum status or because it is their right as human beings. Legal assistance, medical aid, accommodation and support in daily life and in the integration process are services covered mainly by the NGOs, which cooperate with one another in order to improve their activities. Therefore, personal relationships among the members of the organisations are extremely relevant in determining organisational practises through direct cooperation in the field and, subsequently, for competence exchanges.

The following quotations taken from the interviews support this interpretation. With regard to the lack of involvement by the state, the representative from SenzaConfine states: *“The problem is that after the initial reception, the subsequent steps are not implemented, so even if a family finds a place to stay for the first year, they cannot remain there, yet at the same time they are not fully integrated and not able to provide for themselves”* (SenzaConfine 2016). Consequently, voluntary work provided by

the NGOs is necessary: *“Basically, the government exploits the volunteers’ work and sometimes finances religious organisations”* (SenzaConfine 2016). Other comments by the representative from Baobab Experience strongly underline this fact: *“The volunteers somehow have to fill the gap left by the institutions, even if it should be the latter’s responsibility”* (Baobab Experience 2016), and again *“Because the institutions are not able to guarantee the migrants’ rights and support them, we have to do that”* (Baobab Experience 2016). The representative from Mediterranean Hope shares this view and connects it to the Italian situation in general: *“Italy doesn’t have a good welfare state both for Italian people and for migrants; the Italian authorities do not provide any kind of benefit. [...] If you are granted asylum in Italy, you won’t have any economic or other benefit, so you are left completely alone in the labour market”* (Mediterranean Hope 2016). When talking about the SPRAR project, which is referred to as a good example of state intervention, he adds: *“Actually just a small portion of the migrants present in Italy are included in this project. Many of them are instead in other centres that do not have any kind of services, such as language school and professional courses”* (Mediterranean Hope 2016).

The interviewed representative from Mediterranean Hope explains the process that determines the chosen practises: *“How do we learn from different experiences? Probably thanks to all the meetings that we have. Since we meet many people who work in different organisations, we see different examples. As I told you, I spend the weekend with two people who work for Amnesty International. Informally, we got some interesting information about their work and how they organise it, so we are trying to learn new things”* (Mediterranean Hope 2016). The experiences of other organisations are often shared through personal relationships among the volunteers. The following quotations support this view: *“Everybody works for their own association, but when possible, we cooperate of course; we have lots of reunions. We have groups in which we discuss the law and the procedures”* (A Buon Diritto 2016).

“Every time we hear something about a practice that can help us in our daily work or in reaching one of our goals or in implementing one of our activities, we try to get in touch with the organisation to understand how to make it work in our case” (Carta di Roma 2016).

“We also of course rely on others’ competences if we have no experience with something. For example, the guys who are creating the alphabeti-

sation school turn to an organisation that has already dealt with education services for migrants” (SenzaConfine 2016).

Thus, Hypothesis 1a appears to be proven, because it seems to adequately interpret the way organisations, especially NGOs, operate in the field and develop their practices. In fact, personal relationships and cooperation in the field appear to be crucial in shaping the practices adopted by the organisations.

Regarding RAS-related organisations, the cooperation network seems to have developed from an initial state of uncertainty, as revealed by the high proportion of migrants’ deaths at sea, which were allegedly due to deficiencies in state intervention. To understand the development of this network, the MAREM project must rely on data collected during interviews with the representative expert of CISOM, the only RAS-related organisation directly included in the MAREM research, so the perspective is limited. According to what the interviewee reported, CISOM was the first organisation not connected to the Italian state (although, as part of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, it is technically a governmental organisation) to lead rescue operations in the Sicilian Channel starting in 2007. Its decision to intervene was triggered by an emergency situation, caused by the lack of intervention by the Italian state organisations: *“Migrants shipwrecked in the Mediterranean Sea [were not being rescued], so I [the national director of CISOM] called Guardia Costiera to find a way to rescue them and provide them with first aid on the sea”* (CISOM 2016). Since then, a few other NGOs, such as MOAS and MSF, joined the rescue operations throughout the following years, using the practices shaped by CISOM and the relationship they had established with the governmental organisations involved as a model: *“[The other organisations] used our experience as a model, and they started in 2013, and then MSF began as well, at first on MOAS ships and later with their own ships”* (CISOM 2016). In this case, one can see the initially uncertain conditions in the work field have determined isomorphism among organisations involved in rescue operations. The best practises of the leading organisation acting as a role model are imitated and adopted by other organisations. This supports Hypothesis 2a.

Coercive Isomorphism

The way in which legal and political constraints influence the shaping of these organisations' activities is fundamental to comprehending the situation in Italy. Throughout the interviews, it clearly emerged that the state is ambivalent with respect to migration issues: whereas, on the one hand, the state must defend the rights of asylum seekers and fulfils this to a certain extent, on the other hand, it posits the very conditions for these rights to be violated. Regulations and policies are often considered the cause of many of the critical issues related to migration of which the NGOs have subsequently taken charge. A comment by the representative from Mediterranean Hope on the human trafficking situation stresses this point: *"I think that the state activities influence the trafficking a lot. For example, now the European member states have signed this agreement with Turkey,¹² so we are expecting that many of the migrants who were crossing Greece to reach Germany and other countries will divert their journey – they will try to pass by Italy to reach Germany. So, that is an indirect influence, because we change our policy and then the smugglers change their activities"* (Mediterranean Hope 2016).

The interviewed representative from SenzaConfine seems to endorse an even more radical point of view: *"We sent a letter to protest against the new agreement between the EU and Turkey, because it does not defend the dignity of the people who will be expelled from Greece to Turkey, which is not a safe country and where they cannot make any request for asylum"* (SenzaConfine 2016). And again: *"Italian law is the reason why human trafficking exists, because there is no legal way to enter Italy for those people"* (SenzaConfine 2016). The position taken by the representative from CISOM is milder but still consistent with this perspective concerning the ambivalent role of the state: *"In my opinion, an organic and complete perspective on the integration problem is lacking even if much is done. The government also has a problem in managing the money destined for the migrants. They ought to manage it in a more effective way, providing more services and avoiding corruption and scandals"* (CISOM 2016).

When we look at asylum- and refugee-related organisations it is interesting to see how the coercive isomorphism thesis can be applied to the Itali-

12 The Mediterranean Hope representative refers to the agreement between Turkey and the EU of 18 March 2016.

an situation if its logical counterpart is considered (see Hypothesis 1b). In fact, most of the NGOs work outside the boundaries of law prescriptions, because they have to deal with policies and normative deficiencies. This is especially clear for organisations involved in advocacy, such as Senza-Confini, whose representative states: *“Most of the time governmental organisations are our counterparts. Through Tavolo Asilo we entertain a dialogue with the Minister of the Interior”* (SenzaConfini 2016). In particular, a major part of this organisation’s work is devoted to providing assistance to those migrants whose juridical status prevents them from benefiting from state assistance. These are mostly people seeking protection who want to cross Italy in order to apply for asylum in another European country, without being stuck in Italy because of the Dublin Regulation. Moreover, many other migrants come to Italy from countries that are not classified as countries at war; thus, these people are considered irregular migrants and cannot benefit from international protection, despite the fact that their lives could be in danger upon returning to their country of origin. Discussing the beneficiaries of their work, the spokesman for Baobab Experience says: *“Most of them are economic migrants and asylum seekers who do not want to stay in Italy, and they usually do not have documents and have not had their fingerprints taken”* (Baobab Experience 2016). Since these organisations have to deal with these people’s needs outside the legally recognised procedures, no isomorphic processes regarding cooperation with the state can be observed among them.

As far as RAS-related organisations are concerned, the situation is the opposite. This is because these organisations must work within the structure of the governmental organisations that are in charge of safety at sea, such as the Navy, the Guardia Costiera and the Guardia di Finanza. Despite the fact that these organisations deploy their own means and logistical apparatus, they participate in operations coordinated by governmental organisations and therefore have to adjust their structure and modus operandi. The cooperation between them is strictly defined by protocols, and there is almost no room for criticism unless the cooperation is interrupted. This happened when MSF recalled its ships from the Aegean Sea as a critical response to the EU–Turkey agreement of 18 March 2016.¹³ The following statement from the national director of CISOM shows how

13 EU–Turkey statement, 18 March 2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement>.

cooperation in this field is impossible unless organisations endorse policies established by the governmental actors involved: *“The real problem, rather than expectations, [is] the huge amount of rules and regulations that underlie policies to which organisations react. For example, MSF and UNHCR left the Aegean Sea in response to the new agreement between Greece and Turkey. However, because we work with state organisations, we do not expose ourselves politically and we are automatically aligned with government decisions”* (CISOM 2016). Therefore, this close transaction between GOs and NGOs concerning rescue operation planning apparently can lead to isomorphism among the organisations involved.

Normative Isomorphism

With regard to the two hypotheses on the theoretical paradigm of normative isomorphism (see Hypotheses 1c and 2c), the analysis focused on the connection between the educational background of the organisations’ workers and a possible isomorphism between the organisations related to the workers’ professionalisation. Professionalisation of the personnel was expected to be crucial for determining the way of working of the organisations.

Although a homogeneity in the staff’s educational background related to the organisations’ mission seemed to be present when we looked at the asylum- and refugee-related organisations, as a result there were also similarities in the structure or in the way of working. Organisations involved in lobbying and legal assistance, such as A Buon Diritto or SenzaConfine, mainly employ people with an educational background in social science or law: *“[President] Simonetta is a lawyer; then we have a teacher for migrants with a degree in literature, a couple of people with a degree in political science, a nurse with a degree in social sciences. The formal president was a researcher with a degree in anthropology”* (SenzaConfine 2016). *“I am a sociologist and so are some of my colleagues, but we also have economists and, as already mentioned, a lot of lawyers working for us on a voluntary basis”* (A Buon Diritto 2016). Medicina Solidale, which provides medical aid, employs people with an educational background in the medical field: *“They all have an academic background in medicine. Voluntary doctors mostly”* (Medicina Solidale 2016). LasciateCIEntrare and Carta di Roma, which are both involved in monitoring, employ mainly journalists: *“We have journalists, lawyers, activists. People concerned*

with civil action and those kinds of things” (LasciateCIEntrare 2016). “Most of us are actually journalists” (Carta di Roma 2016). Conversely, Baobab Experience, whose mission requires human and relational skills rather than professional ones, employs a variety of people: “There were students, children, old rich ladies, retired people, unemployed people, also some university researchers and so on. We do not require professional preparation” (Baobab Experience 2016).

Despite this connection between the organisations’ missions and their staffs’ educational background, no interviewee was aware of any isomorphic processes that could have been determined by this homogeneity. Similarities seemed to be determined by other factors instead, such as cooperation in the field or, in some cases, the background values and methods adopted by the organisation. The representative of A Buon Diritto underlines this while talking about cooperation with organisations involved in lobbying: *“We cooperate when we are in the field but not when we speak with institutions or members of the Parliament, for example, because in those situations we have a lot of problems, because our method is different and we don’t feel comfortable cooperating in such situations” (A Buon Diritto 2016).* Thus, Hypothesis 1c cannot be fully verified by the results of the data analysis.

With regard to the RAS-related organisation, however, Hypothesis 2c can be supported. According to the activity reports or the websites¹⁴ of the organisations involved in RAS operations, the staff composition is similar and reflects the structure and hierarchy to which these organisations must adapt. Professionals in the health field, especially those in emergency medicine and nursing, and personnel trained in navigation are needed to carry out the rescue operations. The structure and the way of working make it necessary to adapt to determine homogeneity in the workers’ professionalisation. Nevertheless, the clear connection between these elements seems to account for isomorphism among organisations involved in RAS operations that is related to their members’ professionalisation.

14 For example, the website for CISOM is <http://www.cisom.org/attivita/attivita-umanitarie/sar-mediterraneo.html> and that for MSF is <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/emergency-mediterranean>.

CEAS

Since 1999 the EU has been working to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and to improve the current legislative framework, which is intended to ensure that the rights of refugees under international law are protected in its member states. The system sets minimum standards and procedures for processing and assessing asylum applications and for the treatment of both asylum seekers and those granted refugee status (European Commission 2015).¹⁵

The MAREM research is aimed at finding out how far CEAS has been implemented in Italy and whether it affects the work of the asylum-related NGOs. One of the ideas of CEAS is to create the EU as an area of protection and to ensure that there are humane reception conditions (such as housing) for asylum seekers and refugees in Europe¹⁶; in Italy (Rome), however, this right does not seem to be entirely granted at present. It is reported that the asylum seekers and refugees live under bad conditions in the detention centres. This fact seems to be confirmed by the representative from *LasciateCIEntrare*. She claimed that *“because the parliament also does not know these centres in Rome [...], and we know that the system does not guarantee human dignity inside the centres, they asked us to start monitoring the situation”* (*LasciateCIEntrare* 2016). Furthermore, people in need of international protection often do not have the chance to apply for protection because the legal services do not work properly for them. As stated by the representative from *SenzaConfine*, the Dublin Regulation III apparently does not fulfil its goals: *“Dublin Regulation III is supposed to allow the migrants to ask for the country they want to go, but they never applied it. Most of the good things within the regulation are never applied”* (*SenzaConfine* 2016). Furthermore, she pointed out, CEAS also defines who is a refugee or economic migrant and thus sets that person’s legal status, but this does not affect the work of NGOs. *“We do not make any distinction. We consider them all political migrants. We work with everybody for everybody”* (*SenzaConfine* 2016). On the basis of the interviews, CEAS has apparently not been successfully implemented by the Italian state until now.

15 Common European Asylum System; http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index_en.htm.

16 Gaining Asylum in the Union; <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/en/what-we-do/ensuring-legal-protection/eu-asylum-policy.html>.

EASO: Hotspots

After the series of tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea in April 2015,¹⁷ the European Commission proposed to deploy coordinated operational support to frontline member states using the hotspot approach. Operational support provided through the hotspot approach concentrates on registration, identification, fingerprinting and debriefing of asylum seekers, as well as return operations. Italy is the first EU member state where this Hotspot approach, run by EASO and Frontex agents, is currently being implemented.¹⁸ The MAREM research project wanted to find out if this approach has been implemented successfully and how NGOs are connected to it. Based on the interviews, one can conclude that the hotspots currently do not seem to work properly, because human rights violations are being reported: *“The hotspots are not really working. At least this is what the lawyers and activists who are following the situation in the hotspot centres are saying. There are a lot of violations”* (Carta di Roma 2016).

Furthermore, information provided to asylum seekers and refugees seems to be lacking. As the representative from A Buon Diritto stated, *“I saw them [the asylum seekers and refugees] at the hotspots. They don’t tell them anything about the procedure, they don’t explain that it is important to take the fingerprints, they don’t make an individual plan – nothing”* (A Buon Diritto 2016). In general, receiving objective information about the hotspots and the work inside with the asylum seekers and refugees was very difficult. The NGOs Mediterranean Hope, A Buon Diritto and LasciateCIEntrare reported that they tried to get access to the hotspots, but their requests were denied. *“We don’t have a direct EASO contact. We want to go inside the hotspots but we have no authorisation yet”* (LasciateCIEntrare 2016). The hotspots therefore will be an interesting topic for future research.

17 <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean>.

18 The hotspot approach to managing exceptional migratory flows; http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf.

Criticism and Suggestions

The interviewed NGOs were asked to describe their most important criticisms of the asylum procedure in Italy. The answers were divided into two different core categories: one regarding the role of the state and the other regarding a more cultural and political perspective.

The first category relates to the role of the state in the Italian asylum system. NGOs talk about a gap in the system and note that the state's support is weak. The work of the organisations is both needed and exploited at the same time. The representative from SenzaConfine claimed that *“basically, the government exploits the volunteers' work and sometimes finance[s] religious organisations such as Caritas and Gesuiti”* (SenzaConfine 2016). Another problem is that most of the state facilities concentrate on asylum seekers, but most people seeking protection try to cross Italy without getting registered and become trapped in human trafficking – a growing problem. The representative from Baobab Experience added this comment: *“Moreover, from a legal point of view, the figure of the migrant in transition does not exist, they don't have a juridical state, they are not asylum seekers and they are not irregular migrants either until they get caught. All the state facilities and accommodations are meant only for asylum seekers and not for the unregistered people without legal status. This gap in the system feeds the human traffic, because they need to act covertly, hidden from the institutions”* (Baobab Experience 2016). Furthermore, the Italian state supports the hotspot approach, which is criticised by the NGOs because of human-rights violations. *“On the shore, EASO selects migrants according to their country of origin, Eritrean and Syrian, for instance are accepted, while others are rejected, who, according to them, cannot obtain asylum. This is obviously illegal, against the Geneva Convention”* (SenzaConfine 2016).

The other category of criticism is related more to the cultural and political perspective. The NGOs criticise the view of the Italian society concerning the refugee crisis. On the one hand, the situation is dealt with as if it was an emergency, while it is actually a constant phenomenon. *“They always speak about emergencies, but they do not understand that it is not an emergency but something that was already happening, and it is going to happen again and again”* (Carta di Roma 2016). On the other hand, refugees are seen as a humanitarian issue or as a problem rather than as an economic opportunity: *“The problem with the Italian government is that migrants are seen as a problem and not as an investment, and this is a po-*

litical problem, also connected with the populist use of the phenomenon by some political actors” (CISOM 2016).

Expert Proposals

During the interviews, the organisations were asked for their proposals on how to improve the European asylum system. Three modification proposals were shared by all the interviewed NGOs, as follows:

1. They agreed that the Dublin Regulation should be changed. *“The first problem is that the responsibilities have to be distributed throughout all the European countries. That means that [the] Dublin Regulation must be changed because it doesn't work. Second, the welcoming system has to be standardised all over Europe so that not all migrants will want to go to the same place. Everybody should agree to a minimal level of welcoming”* (CISOM 2016).
2. There should be diplomatic relations with countries of origin that are at war, and a plan of economic development should be established for the countries of origin of the economic migrants. *“We need to invest in cooperation for the development of the countries of origin of the economic migrants. We need to create economic opportunities there, through dialogue and a diplomatic relationship with the governments of these countries”* (CISOM 2016).
3. There should be a legal and safe way to enter the European borders (e.g. a humanitarian corridor and a special visa). *“Our idea is to create a legal way to arrive in Europe and then to provide human and fair treatment to those people”* (Mediterranean Hope 2016).

Conclusion

With regard to the asylum- and refugee-related organisations, it can be stated that Italian NGOs play a fundamental role in defending the migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' rights in Rome. The main purpose of these organisations is to provide practical support in the daily life of people in need, beginning with fundamental requirements such as food and accommodations, as well as services such as legal assistance and medical aid. Because the state is not able to fulfil its duties in implementing CEAS, the NGOs must undertake the major responsibility for doing so.

As far as the interviewed asylum- and refugee-related organisations in Rome are concerned, it can be stated that they are well connected to one another and the networks are very heterogeneous with respect to the different tasks and ways of working of the organisations. The only pattern of cooperation that could be identified has to do with the organisations' missions. In fact, organisations involved in providing services to migrants seem to cooperate with other organisations of the same type, namely NGOs. However, NGOs involved in advocating for migrants cooperate mainly with governmental organisations. Furthermore, the conditions are uncertain because the state fails to support the migrants' needs, resulting in a tendency towards isomorphism among the organisations. This can be linked to the direct interaction between their members in the work field. Cooperation among organisations is the only occasion for mutual adaptation to the most effective practices. They are shared through personal relationships between the members of different organisations. This fits the theoretical paradigms of mimetic and coercive isomorphism. Therefore, of the three hypotheses concerning the asylum- and refugee-related organisations network in Rome, two of them, Hypotheses 1a and 1b, can be verified as a result of the MAREM project analysis.

The cooperation network of the organisations involved in the RAS operations is strictly defined by formal agreements among the few organisations directly involved in the rescue missions. In this work field, GOs play a fundamental leading role, whereas NGOs must work within the GOs' hierarchy and adapt to their structures. Isomorphism among these organisations was easily observable, since transactions with the state agencies, which are necessary to pursue the rescue missions, force all the organisations to follow the same procedures and adapt to the protocol's prescriptions. Furthermore, because of the uncertainty that characterises emergency situations, these organisations endorse and adopt the best practices from the organisations that are already involved, leading to isomorphism between them. On the basis of these considerations, all three of the hypotheses concerning the RAS-related organisations' network in Rome – i.e. Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c – are supported by the results of the MAREM data analysis.

Despite the NGOs' contribution to the creation of a sufficient asylum system in Italy, many improvements still need to be made in order to fully implement CEAS. The actors involved in the organisations' networks believe that political intervention by the state is the most critical need, with the aim of improving legislation concerning asylum- and refugee-related

issues. The same applies to the RAS-related issues: regardless of the importance of non-governmental actors in the rescue operations, political intervention to improve and implement the European asylum system is necessary as a way of preventing both shipwrecks and the subsequent expenses related to the RAS operation.

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Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically:

A Buon Diritto

Associazione Carta di Roma

Baobab Experience

CIR

CISOM

Lasciateci Entrare

Medicina Solidale

Mediterranea Hope

Senza Confine

Spain Report

Dea Dhima, Gisella Duro, Alona Mirko, Julia Werner

1. Introduction

Country Profile

The Kingdom of Spain is part of the Iberian Peninsula, located in the south-western part of Europe. Spain joined the European Union (EU) in 1986 (Shubert et al. 2016). It has the biggest area among the countries of this research with 505,370 km² and currently has a population of 46,4 million inhabitants (Statista 2016a, Statista 2016b). Population density in Spain was last measured at 93 people per km² of land area in 2014 (World Bank 2016). The country is divided into 17 autonomous communities, two of which, the Basque Country and Catalonia, have repeatedly tried to gain their independence from the Kingdom of Spain. Although the official language of Spain is Castilian, many other recognised languages such as Catalan, Valencian and Basque are spoken in some regions (Shubert et al. 2016).

Spain's proximity to Morocco is geographically important for an understanding of the asylum situation in Spain. The Strait of Gibraltar separates Spain and Morocco by distances ranging from 14 to 40 km (Enciclopedia Sapere 2016). The Canary Islands, which belong to Spain, are located off the coast of Africa in the immediate vicinity of Morocco, and two Spanish enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, are located on the northern shores of Morocco's Mediterranean coast.

The political system of Spain is a parliamentary monarchy, a social representative, democratic government, in which a constitutional monarch is the head of state and a prime minister is the head of government. After the abdication of King Juan Carlos in June 2014, his son Felipe VI assumed the throne (Shubert et al. 2016). Over the past two years, this system faced a severe crisis. Many elections were held because Mariano Rajoy, the acting prime minister and leader of the People's Party, failed to gain a majority vote in parliament. Since 2015, he led the provisional governments, but new elections will take place in December 2016 (El Economista 2016).

Spain also continues to face internal instability owing to the effects of the 2008 economic crisis in Europe. During these years, as a result of this crisis, the country's unemployment rate rose. With a rate of more than 26% recorded in 2014, Spain in 2016 has the second highest unemployment rate in the EU after Greece (Trading Economics 2016). In July 2016 the unemployment rate registered was of 19,6% (Statista 2016c). The GDP in Spain was worth 25,864 billion US dollars in 2015 (Statista 2016d).

Asylum Profile

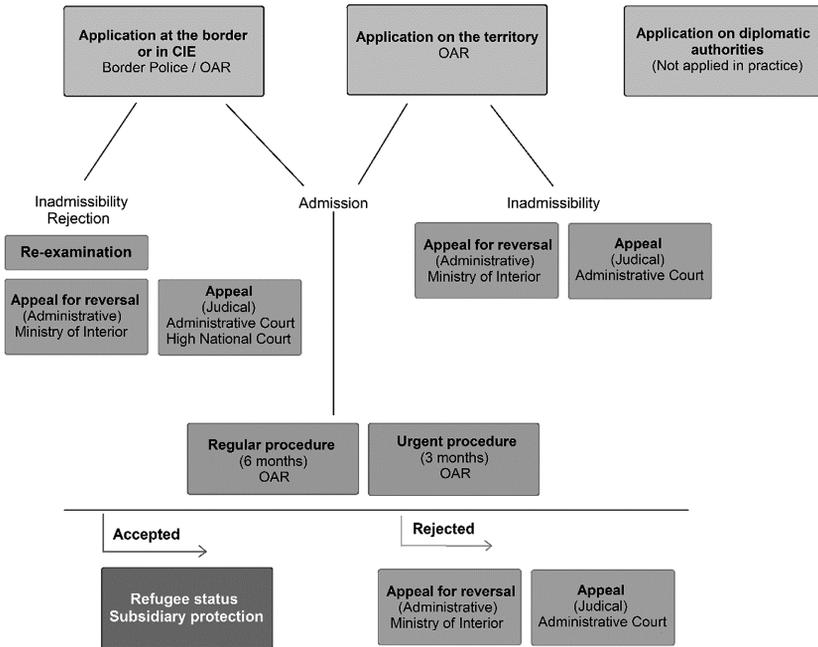
According to Spanish law, asylum seekers can apply for either a regular procedure within Spanish territory or an urgent procedure at the border (ECRE 2016: 14).

In the case of a regular procedure, applicants lodge their requests by sending them to the Office of Asylum and Refuge (OAR), which has one month to examine the application. If the OAR does not issue a decision within that period of time, the application is admitted under positive silence by the Spanish law, and the resolution will determine whether it is admissible or inadmissible. An application can be considered inadmissible for the following reasons: (1) lack of jurisdiction for examination of the application or (2) failure to comply with the formal requirements. If the application is deemed admissible, the Ministry of Interior is given six months to examine the request, although the examination usually extends beyond this time limit (ECRE 2016: 14) (Figure 1). If the application is declared inadmissible, the applicant may appeal for a reversal (*recurso de reposición*) or may file a contentious administrative appeal.

In the case of an urgent procedure, the applicant can ask for asylum at the Spanish border or at a Foreigner Detention Centre (*centro de internamiento de extranjeros*, CIE). The OAR must analyse the application within a period of 72 hours, or four days if the applicant is from a CIE. If the application is admitted, the asylum seeker will be authorised to enter Spanish territory to continue to pursue the urgent procedure. If the application is found inadmissible or is refused, the applicant may ask for reconsideration (*re-examen*) of the request within two days. In the event of inadmissibility or another rejection, an appeal can be submitted before a judge or tribunal. If any of these deadlines are not met, the applicant will be admitted to the Spanish territory to pursue the asylum claim according

to the regular procedure (ECRE 2016: 14) (Figure 1). Application to diplomatic authorities has not yet been put into practice by Spanish authorities (ECRE 2016) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Profile of the Spanish asylum system



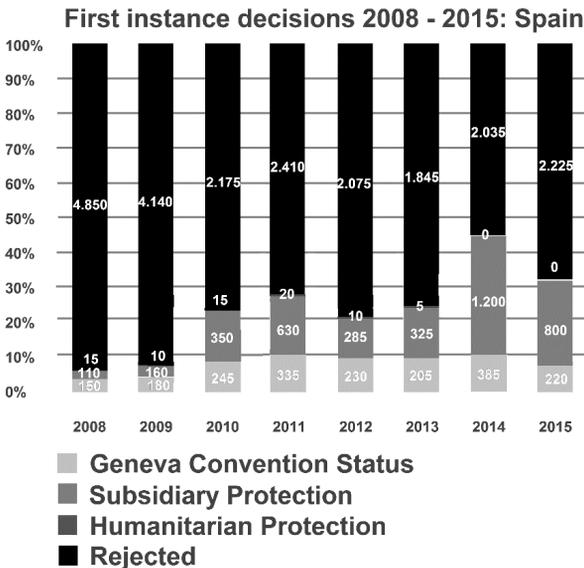
Source: ECRE (2016: 12).

In the past decade, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Spain has not been very high. Between 2008 and 2013, this number fluctuated between 2,500 and 4,500 per year, with reductions varying during these years (Eurostat 2016a). Recently, the situation has changed, and there has been a significant increase in the number of arrivals. According to data from two of the largest asylum-related non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Spain – the Spanish Commission of Aid to Refugees (*Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado*, CEAR) and the Spanish Catholic Commission Association for Migration (*Asociación Comisión Católica Española de Migración*, ACCEM), the number of asylum seekers has almost tripled, from 5,947 in 2014 to 14,780 in 2015 (CEAR 2016). In the first half of 2016 6,875 people have already applied for asylum in Spain, which is 148 asy-

lum seekers per 1,000 of population (Eurostat 2016a). Many people who were seeking protection went to Ceuta and Melilla, which saw approximately 3,000 arrivals registered in 2014 and about 8,000 in 2015 (UNHCR 2016). Asylum seekers also arrive at Madrid Barajas Airport and come from Italy through the relocation system established by the EU. The sea routes that had been used to enter Spain in the past are no longer being used as much (CEAR 2016; UNHCR 2016).

Whereas the number of arrivals in Spanish territory is constantly growing, the asylum recognition rate continues to be low. In 2008 and 2009, more than 90 % of asylum appeals were rejected. However, the number of rejections decreased between 2014 and 2015, with a rejection rate of approximately 68,5 % in 2015 (ECRE 2016; Eurostat 2016a) (Figure 2). The number of asylum seekers given subsidiary protection also decreased, from about 1,200 in 2014 to about 800 in 2015, but humanitarian protection was no longer granted in these two years (Eurostat 2016a) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: First-instance decisions in Spain, 2008–15



Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2016a).

In 2015, asylum seekers originated mainly from Syria (5,724) and Ukraine (3,420), in addition to Palestinians coming via Syria (809). The Syrians

were most likely to be granted protection status: although only 2,2 % were given refugee status, 90,8 % received subsidiary protection. The application of the Ukrainians were to 100 % rejected. Of the Palestinians, 54,5 % were granted refugee status and 27,3 % received subsidiary protection (ECRE 2016) (Table 1).

Table 1: Applications and protection status for asylum seekers in Spain at first instance in 2015

	Applicants in 2015	Pending applications in 2015	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Rejection	Refugee rate	Sub. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	14,780	16,430	220	800	2,220	6,8%	24,7%	68,5%

Breakdown by countries of origin of the total numbers

Syria	5,725	4,265	15	640	50	2,2%	90,8%	7%
Ukraine	3,345	4,195	0	0	35	0%	0%	100%
Palestine	800	895	30	15	10	54,5%	27,3%	18,2%
Algeria	675	505	0	0	370	0%	0%	100%
Venezuela	585	685	0	0	5	0%	0%	100%
Morocco	410	225	15	0	220	6,4%	0%	93,6%
Mali	225	1,565	0	0	230	0%	0%	100%
Nigeria	215	520	0	0	95	0%	0%	100%
Somalia	160	70	10	100	55	6,1%	60,6%	33,3%
Iraq	135	275	5	0	0	100%	0%	0%
Afghanistan	40	100	35	15	5	63,6%	27,3%	9,1%
Eritrea	20	15	5	0	0	100%	0%	0%

Source: ECRE (2016: 6).

Concerning the current situation, the number of first time applicants in the first half of 2016 per million inhabitants was 148, recognising 71 % of applicants (Eurostat 2016b; Eurostat 2016c). In the same period of time, subsidiary protection was granted in 67 % of cases (Eurostat 2016b; Eurostat 2016c). In the first half of 2016 4,515 asylum decisions were recorded in Spain in total, 1,310 of them were rejected ones (Eurostat 2016b; Eurostat 2016c).

Legislation

Regarding asylum-related legislation, it is important to take into consideration the new asylum law passed in 2009, which governs the status of asylum and subsidiary protection for those seeking asylum in Spain. Many of

the aspects that were decided upon have not yet been implemented and are not yet being practiced by the authorities. Also, the law is not specific with regard to certain issues, particularly the treatment of vulnerable cases, family reunification, the possibility of applying for asylum at the embassy and procedural aspects (e.g. border procedures). Meanwhile, because Spain is part of the EU, the law must also follow EU request directives (UNHCR 2016).

Our preliminary overview of the asylum situation in Spain showed gaps in the implementation of asylum laws and EU directives, and the MAREM project aimed to investigate and analyse this situation further.

2. Current State of Research

As is typical of countries located in the south of Europe, immigration is a recent and important phenomenon in Spain. History has demonstrated that *“the migration flows reversed in the last third of the twentieth century; from a sending country of migratory flows, Spain has become a net receiver of immigrants”* (Fuentes 2000: 2). Since the beginning of 2015, the old continent has had to deal with an unprecedented number of people seeking protection in Europe, owing mostly to the escalation of lethal conflicts, especially in the Arab world and on the African continent. This situation raises the question of the extent to which Spain should assist and contribute to the severe effects of this humanitarian drama. According to CEAR, *“Spain received only 0.95% of [all the] asylum applicants in the EU in 2015”* (CEAR 2015: 10), which is relatively low when compared with the other 27 EU countries. In its annual reporting for 2015, CEAR sheds light on two primary reasons for this finding: first, the constant monitoring of the country’s borders, accompanied by brutal abuse, tends to scare asylum seekers away from Spain; and second, the Alien Law, *“which legalises the automatic and collective expulsion of migrants and refugees from the borders of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, prevents access to asylum procedures”* (CEAR 2015: 15).

This protectionist policy of the Spanish authorities has been cause for criticism in scientific circles. According to Vega (2015), *“the Spanish approach to the on-going refugee crisis is certainly striking given the general lack of involvement and indifference with which the national government has addressed the issue”*. The reluctance of the Spanish government, combined with the closed-door asylum policy towards people in need, re-

veals Spain's double-standard policy. Vega suggests that Spain should improve its welcoming policy and should not distance itself from the legal and moral responsibility to accept asylum seekers. *“Even if during its recent turbulent history Spain has been generating refugees in large numbers, with the establishment of democracy its attitude towards the notion of asylum revealed a striking lack of ambition”* (Vega 2015).

Another evocative appeal can be found in the annual report from Amnesty International, which points out that *“where there are fences, there are human rights abuses”* (Amnesty International 2015: 33). In this context, Amnesty International demands more transparency among state institutions, noting that the state should investigate reports of human rights violations committed against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees; make the findings publicly available; hold those responsible to account; and provide victims with appropriate remedies (Amnesty International 2015: 27).

In its annual observation, CEAR emphasises that Spain should take imminent action to *“ensure that not one person is returned, under the Dublin Regulation, to a country that does not guarantee a fair and effective protection and reception system”* (CEAR 2015: 17). This proposal shows the monitoring role of national and local organisations in disclosing the illegal actions of state authorities. CEAR goes further by proposing that *“Spain has to speed up the application procedure for asylum at the border [...] in order to defer people in need of protection [from risking] their lives by taking dangerous journeys”* (CEAR 2015:18).

On the other hand, Stramm (2015) supports the view that Spain's protectionist policy is motivated by the unfair character of burden-sharing on the European level that creates a vicious cycle for the whole system. *“With better burden-sharing, Mediterranean states like Spain and Italy would not have as [great] an incentive to create restrictive immigration policies that prevent asylum seekers from reaching Europe”* (Stramm 2015: 37). Moreover, Stramm emphasizes that Spain's current political response to asylum policy is highly questionable. Changes on the European platform will lead to improvements on the national level as well: *“Increased methods of burden-sharing among EU countries might make Mediterranean countries like Spain, Italy, and Greece more willing to prioritize asylum seekers in the immigration process”* (Stramm 2015: 36). This would include *“the equalisation of costs per applicant, financial compensation, and physical relocation of asylum seekers”* (Stramm 2015: 37).

One weakness in the literature is the descriptive character of the information, which focuses solely and specifically on the problematic situation

faced by asylum seekers in Spain. An examination of the role of asylum-related organisations in managing this humanitarian crisis remains a constant challenge because of the scarcity of scientific studies in this field.

The MAREM project is an international innovative project whose aim is to fill this gap by scrutinising the role of asylum-related organisations and their cooperation networks within the framework of implementing the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). It analyses the characteristics of these organisations and their cooperation ties within the networks of the asylum-related organisational field. At the same time, a consistent aim of the MAREM project is to provide an assessment of the gaps that exist in the Spanish asylum procedures. In addition, our study tries to explain the small number of people seeking protection arriving in Spain compared with other countries in the EU, despite Spain's proximity to Northern Africa. The following sections provide an analysis of the different aspects of asylum-related issues in Spain in terms of the research questions posed by the MAREM project.

3. Hypotheses

Using the data collected, we examined the above-mentioned research questions by relating them to the approach of neo-institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This approach illustrates how similar conditions shape the inner structure and activities of organisations in a similar way. Based on the theory of neo-institutionalism, we proposed the following two hypotheses regarding the cooperation network of asylum-related organisations in Spain:

Hypothesis 1: The involvement and influence of the Spanish government on humanitarian asylum-related organisations contributes to isomorphic processes in the organisational field.

Hypothesis 2: Copying best practices of experienced organisations can lead to isomorphic processes in the field of asylum-related organisations.

These two hypotheses describe the influence of Spanish authorities on the organisations' behaviour by means of financial dependency between the state and asylum-related organisations, as well as the possible behaviour of organisations within their cooperation networks, which can lead to isomorphic processes. These assumptions are based on the concept of coercive isomorphism (for more information on this process, see the first chapter of this book) and will be analysed further in this chapter.

In response to the refugee crisis in Europe, more asylum-related organisations are needed to address this growing problem. Organisations have been developed and have begun to work on asylum-related issues in Spain. To facilitate cooperation among the groups who work in this field, these fairly new organisations contact their more experienced partners and try to emulate their good practices. Therefore, as new organisations emerge in response to the Mediterranean crisis, one can expect to see a tendency towards mimetic isomorphism (see the first chapter of this book). Considering the refugee crisis in general, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3: The escalation of the humanitarian crisis encourages collaboration among emerging actors who refer to the experienced organisations operating in this field. This leads to processes of mimetic isomorphism.

Hypothesis 4 is based on the process of normative isomorphism (for more information about this process see the first chapter of this book):

Hypothesis 4: Spanish asylum-related organisations that choose employees based on their professionalism will become similar to other organisations in this field.

Here, the focus lies on the educational background and additional training of the staff of asylum-related organisations. These organisations are expected to hire staff members who have specific experience that will help them deal with asylum-related issues and harmonise the work of these organisations. Additional workshops, trainings, seminars and other professional meetings can also contribute to similar practices in the asylum-related organisations.

4. Current State of Research

In March 2016, nine expert interviews were conducted in Madrid: six with members of NGOs, two with the staff of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and one with a professor at the King Juan Carlos University in Madrid. Thus, the majority of the interviews involved are NGOs. It was more difficult to contact GOs and IGOs, whereas the Spanish NGOs were most willing to agree to interviews and to answer questions about their work. As a result, the main focus of our research in Spain was on NGOs.

The six interviewed NGOs were Amnesty International, Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR), Comité de Defensa de los Refu-

giados, Asilados e Inmigrantes (COMRADE), Paz y Cooperación, Red Acoge and the Spanish Red Cross. These organisations cover a broad spectrum of activities, including asylum- and refugee-related, immigration and multiple other social and material migration-related issues.

Amnesty International is a human rights-based organisation whose main duties are social mobilisation in the form of campaigns, research work and advocacy. Its staff does not “*work face to face with refugees [or] asylum seekers*” but rather on the international level (Amnesty International 2016), although it is also involved in several individual cases. Several specific campaigns in Spain have led Amnesty International to work on the national level as well, and the office in Madrid focuses on national issues. Financial support for Amnesty International comes from either the organisation’s members (Amnesty International 2016) or from “*personal and unaffiliated donations*”.¹ This allows organisations to remain independent of governments, political and religious ideologies and economic interests.

The Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) is an international organisation that is active in three main domains: (1) social care, which aims to promote and encourage the autonomy of migrants and their achievement of full integration into Spanish society; (2) a ‘law clinic’ with more than 50 lawyers who provide advice and defend the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless or displaced persons; and (3) an advocacy service, which is responsible for research on the political situation and respect for human rights in countries of origin.

CEAR is financed by public and private funding and by private contributors, donors and volunteers.^{2,3}

The Comité de Defensa de los Refugiados, Asilados e Inmigrantes (COMRADE) is a local organisation with a special focus: they offer help to female migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who arrive in Spain alone with their children. COMRADE undertakes seven main projects: organisational help (e.g. with documents, the law); teaching Spanish and English (especially to help migrants’ children integrate into society); translation help (e.g. for important documents); transportation (e.g. helping to reach a hospital); providing money in case of basic or urgent needs (e.g. food,

1 Amnesty International (2016) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/about-us/how-were-run/finances-and-pay>.

2 Interview with CEAR (2016).

3 CEAR (2016) <http://www.pear.es/colabora-con-pear/voluntariado-en-pear>.

hospital bills); assistance for job applicants as well as employee profiling; and psychological help carried out by professionals. The organisation cooperates with the government of Spain, which provides with financial support, but all its staff work on a volunteer basis (COMRADE 2016).

The local NGO Paz y Cooperación describes itself as a “*movement of non-violence and creativity*” (Paz y Cooperación 2016) with the goal of building a world of solidarity and peace. In trying to achieve this goal, the organisation conducts social campaigns and does educational work. Paz y Cooperación not only works in the asylum-related field but also cares about human rights in general and fights for gender equality. Although it received government funding in the past, all its funding now comes from the private budget of Mr. Joaquín Antuña, the vice president of the organisation (Paz y Cooperación 2016).

Red Acoge works on a national level and assists migrants and asylum seekers. It defends the rights of immigrants, supports the process of integration into Spanish society, facilitates access to social services and promotes the coordination and cooperation of the various agencies and associations working on migration issues (Red Acoge 2016).

The Spanish Red Cross is a large international organisation that deals with multiple social and health issues. In addition to its support of asylum seekers, this organisation provides health aid to various groups in society, such as the elderly or those addicted to drugs. Among its migration- and refugee-related tasks are advocacy, organisational help (e.g. economic support, accommodations) and psychological and integrational help. The Spanish Red Cross finances its work with funding from the government and through donations and relies on volunteers.^{4, 5}

In conclusion, NGOs offer legal, financial, economic and social support and carry out integrational work on local, national and international levels. With financial resources from the government, donations and the help of volunteers, NGOs offer first aid for basic needs, training, clarification and advocacy.

Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM, or IOM) is one of the two IGOs interviewed. It is an international organisation with a focus on migration issues. With regional and governmental financial aid, IOM is able to fund refugee relief, public welfare, shelter and integrational

4 Interview with Spanish Red Cross (2016).

5 Red Cross (2016) <http://www.redcross.eu/en/Who-we-are/MEMBERS/Spanish-Red-Cross>.

work, so their main tasks concern trafficking and coordination (IOM 2016).

As part of an international organisation, the Madrid office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados [ACNUR]) is part of the worldwide United Nations Refugees Agency and assumes a supervisory role. In asylum- and refugee-related issues, its main missions include offering organisational recommendations, providing training and monitoring the work of other actors. Its financial resources consist of private and public donations and governmental funding (UNHCR 2016).

We also interviewed Ángeles Cano Linares, a professor at the King Juan Carlos University in Madrid, which is an actor on the national level and recently founded a new faculty designated International Relations, where Professor Cano Linares teaches courses on asylum and refugee issues and is also involved in research projects on this topic. Because she is employed by a state university, her financial resources are governmental (Rey Juan Carlos Universidad 2016).

Table 2 gives an overview of all the organisations we interviewed, as well as the main characteristics of these actors.

Table 2: Interviewed organisations and their characteristics

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms	Main issues
Amnesty International	International	NGO	Human Rights	Multiple
CEAR Madrid	International	NGO	Human Rights	Asylum Seekers and Refugees
COMRADE	Local	NGO	Human Rights	Asylum Seekers, Refugees, , Migrants
Paz y Cooperación	Local	NGO	Human Rights	Multiple
Red Acoge	National	NGO	Human Rights	Immigration
Spanish Red Cross	International	NGO	Human Rights	Multiple
UNHCR [ACNUR] Madrid	International	IGO	Human Rights	Asylum seekers and Refugees
IOM [OIM]	International	IGO	Human Rights	Immigration
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos	National	University	Objectivity	Multiple

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

5. Results

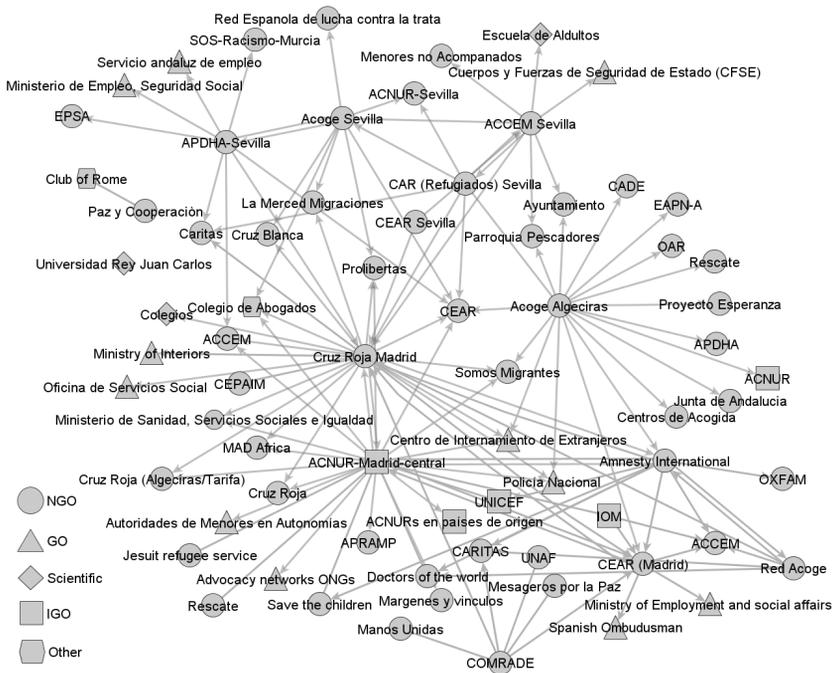
5.1. Networks

Based on the data collected, we created visualisations of cooperation networks showing the asylum-related organisations in Spain and their relevant characteristics, along with their cooperation partners. Information concerning these organisations and their cooperation partners came from three MAREM research rounds that took place from 2014 to 2016. There are 72 asylum-related actors in the visualised cooperation networks of organisations in the asylum-related field of Spain. With the exception of Professor Cano Linares from the King Juan Carlos University, all the actors named at least one cooperation partner. Because the visualisations are based on the results of the MAREM research alone and its aim was to analyse egocentric networks (see the first chapter of this book for more information on this term) of the relevant organisations, they do not show the whole network of asylum-related organisations and thus do not provide a complete overview of the cooperational ties of all such organisations in Spain. The cooperation networks will be analysed in the following sections.

The software Visone we used for the MAREM research project enabled us to create three different types of network visualisations for the asylum-related organisations in Spain: (1) their actor types and cooperation partners (Figure 3), (2) their spatial reach and cooperation partners (Figure 4) and (3) their values and cooperation partners (Figure 5).

Figure 3, the first network visualisation, focuses on the types of organisations. Most are NGOs ($n = 51$), and the rest include eleven GOs, five IGOs, three scientific actors and two other organisations.

Figure 3: Asylum-related organisations in Spain, their actor types and co-operation partners



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014-16 using Visone.

The four most important organisations are three of the NGOs – the Asociación Comisión Católica Española de Migración (ACCEM), CEAR and the Red Cross – and one IGO, that is, the UNHCR. Because almost every actor has a tie to these four groups, they have a central position within the reconstructed network.⁶In terms of their size, the egocentric networks of the interviewed organisations differed a great deal. Whereas the university

6 The aim of the MAREM project was to reconstruct the egocentric networks (for information about this term, see the first chapter of this book) of asylum-related organisations in Spain and the other EU member states examined in this book. To view the larger picture, these networks were connected in visualisations. Although these visualisations do not include the ‘whole network’ (for an explanation of this term, see the first chapter of this book), they do represent some parts of the asylum-relat-

we interviewed had no asylum-related cooperation partners, UNHCR Madrid named 25 organisations as cooperation partners in this field. Even if the interviewed organisations were asked to name their ten most important cooperation partners, as a rule the number of partners would differ. Regarding the actor types of the organisations (Figure 3), one can see that the NGOs COMRADE, ACCEM Sevilla, Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos De Andalucía (APDHA) Sevilla, Acoge Sevilla and Acoge Algeciras tend to cooperate mainly with other NGOs. In this respect, a tendency towards homogeneous networks is evident. At the same time, the networks are not completely homogeneous: in the case of the UNHCR Madrid, one can see a rather heterogeneous network, with different actor types as cooperation partners.

Figure 4, the second visualisation, shows the asylum-related organisations in Spain and their cooperation partners with the focus on their spatial reach. The reconstructed parts of the whole network cover 40 actors on the national level, 20 actors on the international level and 12 actors on the local level. This shows that most of these organisations are active in the inland.

With regard to their spatial reach, the tendency towards homogeneous networks is not as strong as it was in the visualisation of the actor types. For example, COMRADE named six partners, only two of which are working on the national level, as does COMRADE itself. ADPHA Sevilla named nine partners, only five of which are national organisations as is APDHA Sevilla itself. In contrast, Acoge Sevilla is a national organisation with nine named partners, of which seven are partners that are working nationwide. However, in general, the networks are rather heterogeneous in terms of the spatial reach of their cooperation partners (see Figure 4).

ed organisations in Spain. To simplify their descriptions, these parts are referred to by the term ‘network’.

observer states with headquarters in several countries.⁹ This shows that IGOs have a large range and an extended position of power. These numbers differ from those of NGOs such as Red Acoge (est. 1992), which covers only the national level),¹⁰ or CEAR (1979; national level).¹¹ Professor Cano Linares (2016) confirms the IGOs' power position by stating that the UNHCR does a good job in administering and coordinating asylum issues.

However, during the MAREM study, we noticed that sometimes NGOs seem to be more active than IGOs in their field of work on a local level. Although NGOs tend to have more direct contact with asylum seekers and refugees, IGOs do more monitoring work.

The expert interviews made it clear that in the asylum-related field most of the important cooperation partners in terms of the everyday work are the NGOs (Red Acoge 2016; COMRADE 2016; CEAR 2016; Amnesty International 2016). In contrast to the monitoring or supervisory role of IGOs, the NGOs take a direct approach, working mostly face-to-face with those in need; in addition, NGO staff have more diverse skills and can provide such services as advocacy and medical or psychological help (COMRADE 2016; Red Cross 2016; CEAR 2016). Larger NGOs, such as CEAR, offer a wider range of personal assistance than do smaller NGOs, such as COMRADE (COMRADE 2016; CEAR 2016). Thus, NGOs are more locally active than IGOs, which engage in less direct, more structural functions, focusing on organisation-related monitoring and supervisory tasks (Rey Juan Carlos Universidad 2016; UNHCR 2016). The understanding that IGOs are more likely to work at the national and international levels was confirmed by UNHCR:

We don't work on reception or legal assistance or provide any direct services. We have a supervisory role: [on the] one hand, [we are] here to monitor how the Geneva Convention and refugee rights are implemented and how [refugees] have access to their rights. [On] the other hand, in Spain we have this specific role in the procedure, meaning that, under Spanish asylum law, UNHCR is informed of all asylum applications presented in Spain. [At a different stage in] the procedure, we have to issue our opinion [on whether or not to admit a] case or on which level of protection should be granted (UNHCR 2016).

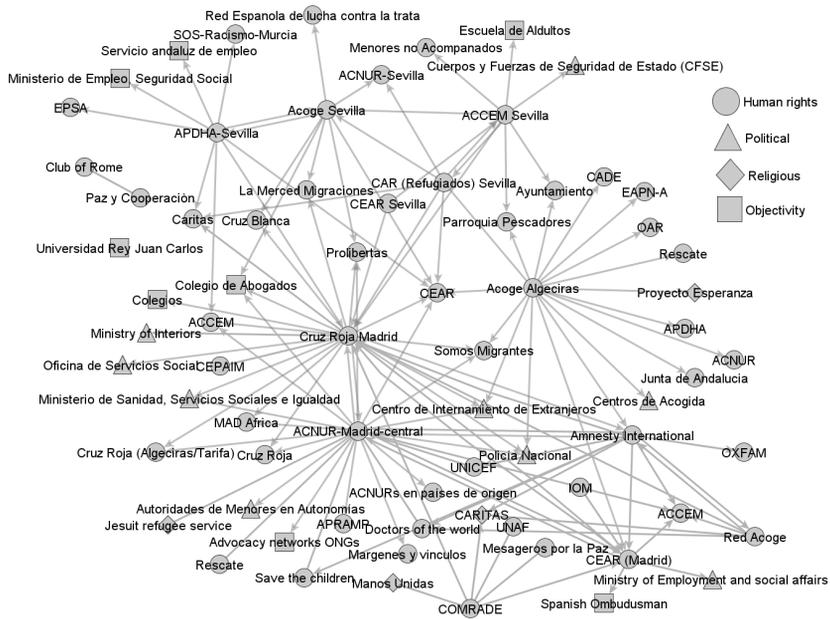
9 See IOM (2016) at: <http://www.spain.iom.int/en/who-we-are>.

10 Interview with Red Acoge (2016).

11 Interview with CEAR (2016).

The next visualisation (Figure 5) shows the asylum-related organisations and their cooperation partners with a focus on their driving norms.

Figure 5: Asylum-related organisations in Spain, their values and co-operation partners



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2014-16 using Visone.

This visualisation, which indicates the actors’ values and driving norms, reveals that most of the actors deal with human rights in their work (n = 51), whereas political driving norms (n = 9), objectivity (n = 8) and religious norms (n = 4) appear less frequently. With regard to their driving norms, we can see that the interviewed organisations tend to have rather homogeneous networks. Four of COMRADE’s six cooperation partners focus on human rights, as does COMRADE itself. As a human rights–oriented organisation, APDHA Sevilla named seven similarly oriented partners but only two objectivity-oriented ones. Acoge Sevilla has eight partners that have a similar orientation and only one partner that focuses on different norms and values.

In general, governmental organisations work together with NGOs and IGOs, with cooperation among organisations that work on national, local and international levels as well as between organisations that subscribe to different norms and values. A tendency to share actor types and similar norms and values with cooperation partners is evident, whereas homogeneity with respect to the spatial reach of organisations does not play as major a role in these networks.

Sometimes actors intentionally cooperate with actors from other fields of work as a way of enhancing their work through combining areas of expertise: *“Every organisation has its own specific field of work”* (IOM Spain 2016). According to Paz y Cooperación, *“It is important to allow people from each organisation their own creativity”* (Paz y Cooperación 2016).

There are no fixed criteria for cooperation, only *soft* criteria: *“It is important to share the same vision of the situation and to have [the] same values”* (IOM 2016). UNHCR Madrid emphasises that *“There are not so many criteria [for cooperation]. UNHCR tries to work with all organisations that can improve or contribute to improve protection for refugees”* (UNHCR Madrid 2016).

The results of our research reflect only a segment of the entire network of asylum-related organisations in Spain, because we did not interview representatives from every such organisation. Instead, we focused on the egocentric networks of a small sample of organisations.

5.2. Isomorphism

In examining our findings from the theoretical standpoint of neo-institutionalism, we applied three specific types of isomorphism to the Spanish cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations: coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. These aspects will now be described in detail.

Coercive Isomorphism

After having investigated the asylum-related activity of experienced organisations in Spain, we found features of coercive isomorphism in the Red Cross, UNHCR and CEAR. The fact that the majority of the more experi-

enced actors shared these organisations' norms and values (see the previous section) is an indicator of coercive isomorphism. One can assume that their working norms are similar because of the extent of cooperation between experienced actors and state authorities. Spanish authorities exert their influence on the asylum-related organisations by providing financial support. Because these organisations require such resources to survive, they feel obligated to yield to coercive pressure from government agencies (Johnston 2013: 37).

In the majority of cases, experienced organisations act within the frame of state programmes financed by the government. *"The Spanish government gives the instruction[s] for our work and we develop them"* (Red Cross 2016). An expert on CEAR in the advocacy field describes the relation between NGOs and the government as follows: *"The relation with public organisations is more like [it is] with donors. It reinforces a pluralistic approach as it tends to cooperate with representatives of all parties"* (CEAR 2016). At the same time, experienced organisations acting in the frame of governmental programmes can delegate some of their tasks to smaller organisations and often combine such assignments with training programmes and the exchange of experience (CEAR 2016). Both the delegation of tasks and the dependence on government funding are evidence of coercive isomorphism. Our research data, as noted above, strongly support the hypothesis that the influence of the Spanish government on humanitarian asylum-related organisations contributes to isomorphic processes in the field.

Mimetic isomorphism

Apart from the collaboration with the government, all the actors we interviewed reported having witnessed other actors' willingness to copy best practices, regardless of their level of experience. This inter-organisational reciprocity of best practices is an indicator of mimetic isomorphism. The Red Cross emphasises that *"if we can see other best practices in other organisations, then yes, why not? We are sharing experience and try to work in the same way in the international arena"* (Red Cross 2016). The collected data (Amnesty International 2016; CEAR 2016) reveal that less experienced or newly emerging organisations copy the work patterns of more experienced actors. The Red Cross, CEAR and Amnesty International support the above-mentioned statements, as follows:

In the same way that Red Cross supports [the] Spanish government, other organisations support Red Cross. CEAR, ACCEM and Red Cross are the experts in this field [...]. We receive much correspondence from small organisations that want to cooperate with us (Red Cross 2016).

CEAR see[s] that organisations are copying other ones, new ones try to interview old established organisations to get tips from them (CEAR 2016).

We try to follow the recommendation of international organisations such as UNHCR, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children – those kinds of NGOs (Amnesty International 2016).

Our results appear to validate the view that, when confronting humanitarian crises, organisations that are less experienced and newly emerged try to follow the recommendations of international and more experienced organisations operating in this field, which leads to the process of isomorphism. All actors are interested in extending and strengthening their cooperation network. The expert from CEAR explains that “*between Red Cross, ACCEM and CEAR there are very good relations, very fluent, in the weekly meetings*” (CEAR 2016). We found a high degree of heterogeneity related to skills and activity within the asylum-related organisational field. “*Organisations tend to cooperate and try to combine efforts to get results and to implement skills [gained] from one another*” (UNHCR 2016).

Normative Isomorphism

With regard to normative isomorphism, the asylum-related organisations in Spain that choose employees based on their professional backgrounds and that have representatives who exchange experiences with other organisations in this field appear to model themselves on these other organisations.

According to Johnston (2013), individuals within a particular profession establish homogeneous norms and cultural behaviours in an effort to appear legitimate. These standards of appropriate behaviours are communicated among their fellow professionals through trainings, seminars and workshops (Johnston 2013: 40).

The MAREM research results indicate that organisations within the asylum-related sector (e.g. ACCEM and CEAR) include professionals who have similar educational backgrounds and who operate based on the same values and norms. “*CEAR, ACCEM and Red Cross have more or less the same profile: social workers, psychologists, lawyers, [with] at least 2 or 3 years of experience. We currently receive training. When I came in, I was [a] psychologist, but I need[ed] training in immigration*” (Red Cross 2016). “*NGOs usually have a high-level educational back-*

ground” (Cano Linares 2016). *“It is important to share the same vision of the situation and to have the same values”* (IOM 2016). Other organisations in the asylum-related field also require a high-level educational background and a profile similar to that described by the Red Cross (Red Acoge 2016; Amnesty International 2016).

5.3. *Asylum Policy in Spain*

In 2009, many refugee-oriented organisations such as CEAR and ACCEM contributed to the formulation of new, appropriate asylum legislation in Spain (CEAR 2016); however, both these organisations unanimously declare that there continues to be a deep discrepancy between legal and practical operations (CEAR 2016). Many national and local organisations criticise the insufficiency of the Spanish asylum system. For example, IOM characterises the asylum procedure as *“delay, delay, and delay”* (IOM 2016), emphasizing the fact that the process now takes two years instead of the three months proposed by law. On the other hand, Amnesty International highlights the tendency of the system to grant refugee status to specific nationalities because of the current humanitarian emergency, reporting that *“last year [2015], only Syrians had priority in obtaining the refugee status; for the rest of nationalities, the procedure was stopped”* (Amnesty International 2016). For the local Spanish organisation COMRADE, the frequent delays in the asylum system are connected to the complex task of verifying the refugees’ requests. *“It is hard to grant asylum, because it is very difficult for the government to collect data concerning the credibility of the requests received”* (COMRADE 2016).

Furthermore, *“the decentralised administrative structure in Spain strongly affects the way migration and asylum issues are managed”* (EDAL 2015). *“The most problematic part of the law is the lack of ‘reglamentos’ ”*¹² (CEAR 2016). The absence of these implementing mechanisms further hinders both the integration of refugees and the work of humanitarian organisations, which must provide multidimensional assistance for an extended period. *“Spanish humanitarian organisations are trying to put more pressure on the parliament in order to bring reglamentos into action”* (CEAR 2016).

12 In English, ‘regulations’ or ‘implementing mechanisms’.

Another issue regarding the focus of organisations is the practice of push-back at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla. Many people are seeking protection, and migrants climb over fences to reach Spanish territory, often regarding Spain as a country of transition or as a connecting bridge to other EU countries (CEAR 2016). In theory, the Asylum Law was implemented as a border procedure, but CEAR points out that applications are more likely to be refused or rejected at the border but to be accepted once the refugees are within Spanish territory (CEAR 2016).

The Public Security Act paved the way for a heated national debate. According to CEAR, *“Collective return [of refugees] at the border without even checking to see whether they are entitled to asylum is a serious threat to the right to asylum”* (CEAR 2016). State authorities are duty-bound to examine each case individually, instead of denying the right to asylum outright.

5.4. *The Common European Asylum System (CEAS)*

The right to asylum reflects several deficiencies, not only on the national level but also on the European level. The preliminary opinion among organisations is that the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) will remain merely an illusion as long as people in need are unable to reach Europe owing to the “iron curtain” policy (ECRE 2015).

The ultimate goal of the CEAS Charter is

“to promote standards of protection by further aligning the EU states’ asylum legislation; effective and well-supported practical cooperation; [and] increased solidarity and a sense of responsibility among EU states and between the EU and non-EU countries” (CEAS 2014).

However, the majority of interviewed organisations, such as Red Acoge (2016) and IOM (2016), share the view that the current CEAS is not an appropriate response to the complex humanitarian drama unfolding in Spain. CEAS needs to be reconstructed and reoriented towards a more human rights focus. Professor Cano Linares, the expert on legal studies at Rey Juan Carlos University, explains that CEAS has collapsed, because different countries are implementing the European directives based on their capacity or willingness to cope with the people arriving at their borders. *“We do not have a common system, but a national system, which hinders proper implementation”* (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos 2016). One of the proposed measures is to abandon the Dublin Regulation, which

deems the state responsible for an asylum seeker. Instead, asylum seekers should be able to decide independently in which country they wish to file their applications. In this way, political and legal precautions will reduce the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and improve the process of family unification (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos 2016). At the same time, Red Acoge confirms that *“the escalation of this multidimensional drama clearly demonstrate the non-functional CEAS system”* (Red Acoge 2016). According to the interviewed organisations, the current CEAS is not a solution to the problematic asylum situation in Europe, so alternative approaches are needed.

5.5. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

It is important to shed light on the relationship between the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the Spanish asylum-related organisations. The aim of EASO is to offer technical and practical support to the Mediterranean countries affected by the large influx of asylum seekers and refugees (see the second chapter of this book for more information on EASO). Despite the fact that Spain is part of the western Mediterranean region, EASO does not engage in cooperative talks with the majority of the organisations we interviewed, such as COMRADE, Red Acoge and Paz Y Cooperación. This is how the NGO Amnesty International explains its professional relationship with EASO: *“We do advocacy work but do not cooperate with EASO. We ask for some information about relocation procedures and use [it] to get through national authorities, but we do not get too much information about it”* (Amnesty International 2016).

CEAR has a consultative partnership with EASO, stating that *“there are no projects [we do] together, but [EASO] consults CEAR once or twice a year, it drafts a report and CEAR is in the acknowledgment”* (CEAR 2016).

UNHCR, on the other hand, cooperates with EASO on a regular basis: *“there are a couple of collaborations to train case workers police at the enclave’s borders. There is collaboration between UNHCR and EASO, but not as a national office”* (UNHCR Madrid 2016). Even Red Cross Madrid confirms that EASO is an important partner when it comes to exchanging information and professional experience: *“We have a system and every month we change [the] person who is working there; we go there and support them; we are sharing best practices”* (Red Cross 2016).

Based on the preceding descriptions, EASO appears to be inclined to engage in closer and more effective cooperation with IGOs than with local organisations.

5.6. Criticism and Suggestions

The majority of the interviewed organisations did not hesitate to share their opinions about critical aspects of the asylum system that warrant improvement. CEAR suggests that Spain renegotiate and amend the admission agreement with Morocco to include human rights safeguards in line with Spain's and Morocco's obligations under international law (CEAR 2016). This is the most important step, because the current agreement is a catalyst for the violation of human rights. CEAR is quite consistent in its declarations confirming that over two consecutive years this is the main reason for the low influx of refugees. At the same time, there are also a couple of reasons which influence this trend. The legacy of Spanish economic crisis in 2008 created a state of insecurity among asylum seekers for creating a new life in Spain (Red Accoge 2016). According to Red Cross "People do not want to stay in Spain because of difficulties with job and the economic stability here" (Red Cross 2016). Moreover, Red Cross states that Western Countries such as Germany and Sweden are seen as the best option for asylum seekers for requesting asylum (Red Cross 2016). In concrete terms, "Asylum seekers have families in north of the Europe, social network works, so they come here and say I want to stay with my family, my friends and Spain is not an option" (Red Cross 2016).

On the other hand published in the CEAR Refugee Executive Report of 2015 are consistent with the information we gathered during the interviews conducted in 2016 (CEAR 2015). The double standard in Spanish politics is heavily criticised by local organisations, which are more familiar with Spanish society and systematically follow political events in that country (Red Accoge 2016). According to Paz y Cooperación, there is a gap between talk and action on the part of the government: "*Politicians talk about [the] great capacity Spain has to receive refugees, but the government does not use it. To do nothing is not a solution*" (Paz y Cooperación 2016). This organisation group also notes that "*more governmental reflection and reaction are needed in order to make things work better*" (Paz y Cooperación 2016).

“The government does not face harsh resistance from the Spanish society. The Spanish society is quite willing to host refugees” (Red Acoge 2016). According to Red Acoge, the political class does not generate hateful speech and is not xenophobic. *“Spain does not have a xenophobic society; it does not have a class of politicians who exhibit this political animus, unlike Austria or France”* (Red Acoge 2016). Thus, politicians gain social acceptability if they show a more hospitable or welcoming approach to refugees.

With the eruption of the Eurozone crisis of 2008, Spain experienced a severe economic downturn, which was reflected in the drastic cuts in the funding of refugee programmes. According to COMRADE (2016), *“everything could be improved if one just had more money”*. Apart from the monetary aspect, many local NGOs, such as Paz y Cooperación and Red Acoge (2016), are confident that the many inadequacies in implementing the asylum system would not exist *“if the political class show[ed] the willingness to deal with them seriously”* (Paz Cooperación 2016).

In addition, Red Acoge, a national NGO, stresses that the partnership between Spanish asylum-related organisations is quite solid, but that they still have only a managerial role in dealing with the crisis; they cannot tackle the roots of the problems that originate in the refugees’ home countries. *“It comes with a strong declaration that human rights can be protected only by curing the causes of the problem”* (Red Acoge 2016). Red Acoge suggests that the EU request European countries to engage in diplomatic solutions to deal with the roots of the problem. Nevertheless, the asylum-related organisations have accomplished a great deal by employing the best practices in coping with the severe effects of this humanitarian crisis.

6. Conclusion

After reviewing the research questions and the hypotheses proposed at the outset of this project, we now summarise the main results of our research. First of all, it is worth noting that the results of our interviews reflect only a portion of the whole network of asylum-related organisations in Spain.

Concerning the role of cooperation ties in the networks of asylum-related organisations in Spain, we conclude that the spatial reach of these organisations involves a heterogeneous network approach. In terms of their participating actor types, driving norms and values, the networks appear to

be rather homogeneous. It became clear during this study that NGOs tend to have a more direct approach and more diverse work fields when compared with the monitoring or supervisory role of IGOs. In general, Spanish governmental organisations work with the NGOs and IGOs, and there is cooperation among the organisations that work on all three levels – local, national and international.

As to the general efficiency in refugee-related fields of work, an organisation's size and tradition are more important factors than are the differences in local, national and international spatial reach. Furthermore, there is a low emergence within the ties of the actors, meaning that they sometimes cooperate in particular with actors in other fields of work to share their knowledge and fulfil their allotted tasks.

Although the network approach appears to be heterogeneous in one aspect, we did observe signs of isomorphism. Clear signs of normative isomorphism include the fact that the majority of actors adhere to similar norms and values in their work and that the educational background of the employees is similar among organisations. Evidence of coercive and mimetic isomorphism includes the sharing of experience among asylum-related organisations in Spain and their dependence on government funding. These isomorphic processes resulted in similarities among all the actors we studied. The professional background of the employees in these organisations and their specific training in this field also reflect possible isomorphic processes.

Another sign of isomorphism within the organisations is the willingness to copy the best practices of the other actors. The MAREM research revealed that less experienced or recently founded asylum-related organisations adopted the patterns of work exhibited by more experienced, traditional actors. Another note worthy aspect was the tendency of the organisations to choose strategic partners from among the larger and older organisations, regardless of their size and experience.

With respect to the effectiveness of asylum-related organisations in implementing the rules of law at the national and European levels, one can conclude that even if legislation is good on paper, much work still needs to be done in practice, especially at the European level. Every organisation we interviewed believes that the Spanish asylum procedure is generally a good one, but they criticise the delays in processing applications. There is a gap between the articulation and the implementation of the rules. For those seeking refugee status, the lack of regulations or of implementing mechanisms causes delays in the application procedure. However,

progress in this area can be made only if the politicians are willing to deal appropriately with every reform that pertains to asylum seekers and refugees.

From the European-level perspective, every organisation we interviewed criticised CEAS, saying that although the common rules may exist on paper, in reality they continue to be interpreted in different ways by the EU member countries. Spanish organisations suggest that the member states must be willing to share and show solidarity to harmonise policy and help to enforce CEAS.

Another important finding in our research was an explanation as to why Spain does not attract many asylum seekers, even though it is one of the largest countries in the EU. There are several reasons why people who are in need of protection do not want to apply for asylum in Spain, one of which is the country's unstable economic situation. Another is the desire for family reconciliation with the northern countries of Europe, such as Germany or Sweden. The high unemployment rate and Spain's proximity to the Middle East also make it unattractive to newcomers. There are historical reasons as well: in the past, the Spanish people themselves were refugees, and the connection to South America and other Hispanic countries continues to be strong.

The interviewed organisations stated that the humanitarian organisations as well as members of Spanish society are more than willing to welcome more asylum seekers and refugees. Nevertheless, many problems have kept this from happening. One of the biggest problems is the limited budget of many of these organisations: limited funds mean limited capacity to carry out their work. Thus, financial support is limited for those seeking help.

Despite the many problems that plague the Spanish asylum system, the number of arrivals in 2015 and in the first half of 2016 increased substantially. If the EU improved its policies regarding the relocation of asylum seekers and refugees throughout Europe, it is possible that Spain could contribute more to the underlying refugee crisis. If the EU improves CEAS and makes the relocation system more effective, Spain could make a substantial contribution to relieving the humanitarian crisis facing the old continent.

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Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically:

Amnesty International
CEAR
COMRADE
IOM
Paz y Cooperación
Red Acoge
Red Cross
Rey Juan Carlos University
UNHCR

Germany Report

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1. Introduction

Within the European Union, Germany is the country with the largest population. With its gross domestic product of \$40,977 per capita in 2015 (Statista 2016a), the German economy is now the strongest in Europe. The German unemployment rate (4,2 %) as of July 2016 is one of the lowest in Europe correspondingly (Statista 2016b). The country has a total area of 357,022 km² (Statista 2016c) and a population of about 81,1 million (Statista 2016d). In 2015, Germany was faced with the largest number of migrants entering the EU in recent years, with a total of 476,649 asylum applications being lodged – the highest number of applicants in that year, followed by Hungary (about 177,000) and Sweden (about 163,000) (Hawkins 2016: 15). In the first half of 2016 the number of first-time asylum applicants has already reached 361,710; that is 4,428 asylum applicants per million inhabitants (Eurostat 2016a). This number marks an all-time high in the recent history of asylum in Germany. Large numbers of migrants had entered the country previously, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, when recruitment agreements, mainly with Turkey, Greece and Italy, gave foreign workers the opportunity to migrate to Germany legally. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification, Germany saw a rise in asylum applications, which reached a peak in 1992 (roughly 440,000 applicants) (Hanewinkel and Oltmer 2015: 3). Between 1992 and 2010, immigration declined, as did the number of asylum applications; however, since 2007, this number has been increasing again, reflecting recent global developments (Hanewinkel and Oltmer 2015: 3, 6).

The German asylum system mainly adheres to the following directives of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).¹ Asylum applications must be filed with the local bureau of the Federal Office for Migration and

1 The description here is based on the *Country Report: Germany* (Kalkmann 2015).

Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, BAMF), which has several centres across Germany's federal states. Asylum claims made by asylum seekers who do not carry identification papers and/or who enter the territory after having left a third country that is deemed safe may be rejected; however, the state police usually refer all asylum seekers to BAMF. If people seeking protection are eligible for asylum, they will be accommodated at an initial reception centre, which provides the necessary basics ('first needs'), such as shelter, food, heating and hygiene products. After filing their asylum application, they will be subjected to regular procedures. BAMF conducts personal interviews with the asylum seekers to determine their itinerary and possible reasons for being granted asylum. If the Dublin Regulation applies to the case, the asylum seeker's claim may be categorised as 'inadmissible', and the person will be sent back to the country responsible for examining the asylum claim. In reality, the Dublin procedure has been suspended for those coming from Greece and Malta, and several German courts have decided that there should also be no deportations to Italy and Bulgaria.

Asylum can be granted either in the form of constitutional asylum, which is the refugee status according to the Geneva Convention, or in other forms of protection (subsidiary status, prohibition of deportation). In addition, national protection status can be granted to people at risk of "substantial and concrete danger to life and limb or liberty" (Kalkmann 2015: 13). A maximum of three appeals can be submitted to the court and can have a suspensory effect on deportation if the application was not rejected and deemed 'manifestly unfounded or inadmissible'. BAMF conducts accelerated procedures for asylum claims that are either manifestly unfounded or well founded. Manifestly unfounded asylum claims are claims made by people coming from what are regarded as safe countries of origin, which (2016) include Ghana, Senegal, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro. For people with a good chance of being granted asylum, written procedures can replace the personal interview, although only positive decisions can be made this way; otherwise, the application must be subjected to the regular procedure. In 2015, people from Syria or Eritrea and religious minorities from Iraq were eligible for the written procedure if they so chose.

Regarding the current asylum situation in Germany, there has been much talk about the refugee crisis, with numbers of up to 1,1 million asylum seekers having entered the country (BAMF 2016a). However, the numbers of third-country nationals who entered Germany in 2015 are

highly unreliable and vary significantly depending on the source of information. It was implied that some 500,000 people had to wait to apply for asylum during that year, but that there were several issues with incompatibility of the registration software, double counting and other issues. Moreover, the influx of a large number of migrants caused the German accommodation system as defined by law to collapse. Upon their arrival, migrants were not accommodated in initial reception centres where they would generally file their asylum claims with BAMF. Instead, they were transported to various kinds of emergency shelters where they were not able to apply for asylum and were simply given a document, called *BüMA (Bescheinigung über die Meldung als Asylsuchender)*, that confirmed their “having reported as an asylum seeker” (Kalkmann 2015: 15). Subsequent lodging of an asylum application might take several months. This distorts the numbers, meaning that there is no reliable information about how many people seeking protection are currently in Germany and how many of them will actually apply for asylum (Kalkmann 2015: 13 ff.; Bogumil et al. 2016: 128 ff.).

BAMF does, however, supply reliable information on filed asylum applications. When based on number of asylum applications per 10,000 inhabitants in 2015, Germany ranks fifth out of the 28 EU countries, but with a total of 59 applications per 10,000 inhabitants, it still exceeds the EU-28 average of 26 (Hawkins 2016: 15). Of all the applications received in 2015 in Germany, 441,899 were first-time applications and 34,750 were follow-ups. Since 2014, the number of first-time applications has increased by 155,3 % (BAMF 2015: 7).

First-instance decisions (2015) by BAMF resulted in a protection rate of 49,8 % (BAMF 2016: 35), which is slightly below the EU-28 average of 52 % (Eurostat 2016c). The rates for humanitarian (refugee) protection and subsidiary protection are shown in Table 1. The high number of pending applications was due to the large influx of asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015, which caused BAMF to fall behind in processing registrations and filing new applications, severely exacerbating long-standing capacity issues (Bogumil et al. 2016: 128; Kalkmann 2015: 6, 10).

Table 1: Asylum applications in Germany in 2015

Applications in 2015	Pending applications in 2015	Refugee rate	Subsidiary protection rate	Rejection rate	Formal decisions
441,899	364,664	48,5%	0,6%	32,4%	17,8%

Source: Adapted from Kalkmann (2016: 6) and BAMF (2016: 7, 34, 42).

According to Eurostat data, in the first half of 2016 total recognition rate for Germany constituted 68 % and subsidiary protection was granted in 9 % of cases (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016f). In total, 256,680 asylum decisions were made in Germany in this period of time, 82,450 of them were negative ones (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016f). Refugee rate constituted 58 % in the first two quarters of 2016 (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016f).

Between January and October 2015, the main countries of origin of asylum applicants were Syria, with 103,708 applications filed; the Balkan region (Albania: 49,692, Kosovo: 35,583, Serbia: 24,486); and Iraq, with 21,303 applications. Only 0,02 % of applications filed by Syrians were rejected, whereas the rejection rates for Albania, Kosovo and Serbia were at 99,8 %, 99,5 % and 99,8 %, respectively; 79,4 % of Iraqi nationals received some form of protection (Kalkmann 2015: 6). The main countries of origin statistics hasn't changed in the end of 2015 (Eurostat 2016d).

Table 2: Countries of origin of asylum seekers in Germany, January–October 2015

Country of origin	Number of applications	Protection rate (refugee status, humanitarian/subsidiary protection) (%)	Rejection rate
Syria	103,708	99,98	0,02
Albania	49,692	0,2	99,8
Kosovo	35,583	0,5	99,5
Serbia	24,486	0,2	99,8
Iraq	21,303	79,4	20,6

Source: Adapted from Kalkmann (2015: 6).

The research presented in this chapter was carried out in the city of Bochum, which is located in the federal state of North Rhine–Westphalia (NRW). Although NRW comes in fourth among the federal states when ranked according to its size geographically, in population it by far surpasses Bavaria, which is ranked second. With its population of 17,6 million,

NRW is the most densely populated federal state in Germany (Statista 2016e). It also receives the largest share of asylum seekers (21.12%), followed by Bavaria (15%) (Stadt Bochum 2016), owing to the Königstein Quota System (the *Königsteiner Schlüssel*), which determines the number of asylum seekers sent to each federal state and city. It allocates quotas according to population size and economic performance, not surface area (BAMF 2015). Bochum itself is part of the fifth largest agglomeration in Europe, the Ruhr Valley. With an area of 145,4 km² and a population of 369,314 (Stadt Bochum 2015), Bochum receives 1,6 % of the asylum seekers allocated to NRW (Stadt Bochum 2016). As of 2016, the unemployment rate in Bochum was at approximately 10 % (Stadt Bochum 2016a), which is 3,6 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for the whole country, which was 6,4 % in 2015 – the lowest number since the German reunification (BA 2016) and below the EU-28 average of 9,4 % (Eurostat 2016b).

As of January 2016, there were 5,350 asylum applicants registered in Bochum and about 150 new asylum applicants arriving per week. They were accommodated at 261 reception camps across the city (Stadt Bochum 2016b). As of 1 January 2016, there were 17 gyms being used as emergency accommodation. Bochum accommodates about 12,25 asylum seekers per 1,000 inhabitants in 2016, not counting refugees and those asylum seekers who had their claim rejected but their deportation suspended (WDR 2016a, b). This number is considerably higher than the 4,428 asylum seekers per million inhabitants in the whole of Germany, as in the first half of 2016 (Eurostat 2016a).

In this chapter, we focus on the city of Bochum to examine the work being carried out by the cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations and their role in the local asylum system in Germany. In particular, we collected data from major actors, networks and those working locally with asylum seekers and refugees and elicited the organisations' views on the asylum situation in Europe.

2. *Current State of Research*

A considerable amount of research has been published concerning asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. Because many of those publications address the legal aspects of this field, they are not particularly relevant to the MAREM project. Other studies focus on the social and integration aspects

that affect asylum seekers and refugees. For example, in the report by the Robert Bosch Stiftung (2016), several experts analysed the asylum situation in Germany in 2015 and made recommendations, focusing mainly on these issues, although they also examined matters on the European policy level. They found that a system of burden-sharing at the EU level is required and proposed that a solution should be found on this level. They also proposed that the German asylum procedures should be enhanced, which has some relevance to the MAREM project, because it discusses CEAS and also considers the German background. Lahusen (2016) analysed the bureaucratisation of the EU through CEAS and concluded that the EU has successfully institutionalised the legal framework. He found that although a common European administrative state has yet to be established, a Europeanisation is occurring on the local administrative level. Hatton (2012) addressed similar issues, focusing on whether an EU-wide policy system can and should be integrated and concluding that deep integration of a joint system is preferable and achievable. Kalkmann (2015) presented comprehensive data on both the German system and CEAS, as well as the on how they deviate from each other. This was particularly useful for understanding the level of implementation of CEAS in Germany. Concerning the national level, Oltmer (2015) concluded that Germany has difficulties coordinating the countless political and administrative actors between the different levels and that people in need of protection come to Germany in particular because they can find already established networks of families and other migrants there. Bogumil et al. (2016) pointed out deficiencies in the German asylum system that stem mainly from an inability to cope with the Office for Asylum and Refugees, the complicated bureaucracy and problems with the registration software.

Kleist (2015) published one of the few reports on the contributions of asylum-related organisations, with a focus on the social structure, and concluded that most volunteers work within associations and self-organised groups and that their function is to accompany asylum seekers and refugees to meetings with public authorities and to give language lessons.

Although studies have been done regarding legal, social, integration and policy issues on several levels, no research is currently available regarding the organisational networks of asylum-related organisations and CEAS. In response to this research gap, we formulated the following research questions as the basis for that part of the MAREM project focusing on Germany:

- How do the cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations in Bochum function?
- Who are the important actors in the refugee-related organisational field, and how are they linked to one another?
- How is CEAS relevant to the asylum-related organisations in Bochum?
- Can forms of isomorphism (described in the first chapter of this book) be identified in and among asylum-related organisations, and is there a gap between talk and action on both the local and EU level?
- What are the organisations' views on CEAS and its implementation at the local level, and what do organisations propose for the improvement of CEAS and the asylum situation in Europe?

3. Hypotheses

Because the aim of the EU is to implement CEAS by providing a uniform standard for the admission, handling and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, it is reasonable to assume that coercive isomorphism occurs that stems from institutional pressures and government directives. Moreover, dealing with asylum seekers and refugees requires that organisations be highly flexible, and new organisations have emerged in response to the situation in 2015. Presumably, funding for migration-related projects is rather short-term and project-specific, so mimetic and normative isomorphism may also be observed within the organisations that deal with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum.

Provided that these processes are indeed to be observed, the theory of neo-institutionalism (described in the first chapter of this book) suggests that there will be a tendency towards homogenisation across the organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum. This might exert pressure from below, causing the local city administration to adapt to the organisations' expectations, thus causing a change from below rather than from the level of the EU. Extensive networking may occur at all levels, and city administrators and local organisations might seek to influence each other, further promoting homogenisation.

In summary, we thus propose six hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 1*: Forms of coercive isomorphism may be detectable.
- *Hypothesis 2*: Forms of normative isomorphism may be detectable.
- *Hypothesis 3*: Forms of mimetic isomorphism may be detectable.

- *Hypothesis 4:* If Hypothesis 1,2 and 3 prove to be true, there may be tendencies towards homogeneity within the organisational networks of asylum related organisations in Bochum.
- *Hypothesis 5:* Intensive networking that further promotes homogeneity may be taking place in Bochum.
- *Hypothesis 6:* Homegenisation among local organisatiois may exert pressure on the local government and travel upwards to EU level.

4. Data

In the first quarter of 2016, the MAREM research group conducted eleven interviews with asylum- and refugee-related organisations operating in Bochum. Table 3 gives a detailed list of the interviewees and their main characteristics.

The interviews were conducted with executive employees of six local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), one local governmental organisation, two voluntary networks,² a lawyer³ specialising in refugee and asylum issues and a research institute (Ruhr-University Bochum). We collected relevant data on how the cooperation networks in Bochum function and on the extent to which they affect the establishment of CEAS. In order to identify isomorphic processes, the interviewed experts were asked several questions regarding their own education and that of their co-workers, as well as whether they copied best practices from other organisations and how much EU directives have affected their work. We also examined the cooperation of asylum-related organisations to other relevant organisations and the homogeneity or heterogeneity of those networks.

2 'Networks' in this case refers to official actors, not ties between actors. Voluntary networks in Bochum show characteristics of organisations and act as such.

3 The lawyer is not affiliated with any organisation but served as an expert on asylum issues during this research.

Table 3: Interviewees in 2016 in Bochum

Organisation	Spatial reach	Actor type	Driving norms	Main issues	Tasks	Resources
PLANB Ruhr e. V.	Local	NGO	Human rights	Youth	Support	State, private
Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Bochum	National	NGO	Human rights	Asylum	Support	State, private
Ronahi e.V.	Local	NGO	Human rights	Asylum	Support	State, private
Kinder- und Jugendring Bochum e.V.	National	NGO	Human rights	Youth	Support	State, private
Evangelischer Arbeitskreis Asyl im Kirchenkreis Bochum e.V.	Local	NGO	Religious	Asylum	Support	State, private
HaRiHo – die Stadtteilkolpartner	Local	NGO	Human rights	Integration	Support	State, private
Jobcenter Bochum	Local	GO	Social security	Labour market access	Support	State
Netzwerk Wohlfahrtstraße	Local	Network	Human rights	Integration	Support	Private
Netzwerk Flüchtlinge Langendreer	Local	Network	Human rights	Integration	Support	Private
Heike Geisweid	Local	Lawyer	Human rights	Asylum	Advocacy	Private
Ruhr-University Bochum – Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict	National	Research institute	Objectivity	Humanitarian crises	Research	State

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

The NGOs and voluntary networks we interviewed conduct their operational work on the local level. In most cases, they specialise in the support of migrants and share common key issues such as integration and youth work. Furthermore, PLANB Ruhr e. V., Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Bochum⁴ and Ronahi e. V. are in charge of several reception centres. With the exception of the Ruhr-University Bochum (the only research institute interviewed) and the Jobcenter Bochum (the only GO interviewed), all the organisations are human rights-orientated, but most have other, additional

4 The German Red Cross.

driving norms. Most of the organisations have their financial support provided by a combination of state and private sources (Table 3).

Hereafter, the organisations we interviewed will be referred to by the following abbreviations:

PlanB	PLANB Ruhr e. V.
DRK	Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Bochum
Ronahi	Ronahi e. V.
Kinder- und Jugendring	Kinder- und Jugendring Bochum e. V.
AK Asyl	Evangelischer Arbeitskreis Asyl im Kirchenkreis Bochum e. V.
HaRiHo	HaRiHo – die Stadtteilpartner e. V.
Jobcenter	Jobcenter Bochum
NW	Netzwerk Wohlfahrtstraße
NL	Netzwerk Flüchtlinge Langendreer
RUB	Ruhr-University Bochum.

In the following section, we present the results of our research in Bochum.

5. Results

5.1 Networks

All the interviewed asylum-related organisations stress the importance of cooperation. When asked about the importance of networking and cooperation, PlanB (2016) had this to say:

It is very important. If we did not cooperate, we would know only a small part of what we know at the moment. If you do not keep yourself up to date through cooperation and aiding one another, the whole thing will not work.⁵

The AK Asyl (2016) shares similar views:

You have to try to be active in as many networks as possible, because we can only ensure having the most up-to-date information available if we think [in] networks. [...] You need objective information. This can be ensured only if one is incorporated into networks. A stand-alone island solution is unimaginable in this context and would not make any sense at all.

5 This statement and all that follow were translated from German to English by the authors of this chapter.

The Kinder- und Jugendring (2016) agrees and adds the following:

What works extremely well here is the networking of different aid organisations. The cooperation with individual employees of the administration is also truly excellent.

In addition, there is an elaborate system of networks and regular meetings in Bochum that appears to involve all relevant organisations. Such networks can be divided into two categories. The first category includes networks of volunteers that evolved around individual reception centres to provide support to asylum seekers and refugees and then spread their links around the city; these networks now also include actors from professional organisations. The second category includes networks whose main purpose is the exchange of information, especially (but not exclusively) with professional organisational actors and city administrators.

The volunteer networks' main focus is on supporting asylum seekers and refugees in all areas and concerns of their day-to-day life. These networks are highly flexible and consist of a heterogeneous group of volunteers who offer a wide range of assistance.

A network like Hamme Hilft is casual, very flexible (HaRiHo 2016). For us, it's all about how we can help people to connect with each other [...]. It is a dynamic process. You have to sensitise yourself to the needs of the people. We want to give many people the opportunity to [become active] themselves (NW 2016).

Offers of assistance are directed primarily at asylum seekers living in the reception centre in question, but these centres are usually open to anyone willing to participate. They do not discriminate against anyone, as the following statements reveal:

The philosophy is clear; we share the same values. We generally share the opinion that everyone is human. And that all those seeking aid have the right to get it (HaRiHo 2016).

The guideline here is to help, or help to help. We try to treat the refugees with respect (AK Asyl 2016).

The reason people are coming to us is completely irrelevant. Those persons need help, which they will get. We do not draw distinctions. Nobody asks, 'So are you from a safe country?' Quite the opposite! We do not care about things like that (NL 2016).

Two of the volunteer networks in Bochum were interviewed during the MAREM project. NW was one of the first asylum-related networks to be established in Bochum, and it started as a neighbourhood initiative to support a nearby reception centre. The second one is NL, which is relatively

young and was founded for the same reasons. The AK Asyl can also be considered a network of this category, and HaRiHo is closely linked to the network Hamme Hilft. Networks that focus on the exchange of information include the Sozialraumkonferenz,⁶ the Initiativkreis Flucht and Asyl.

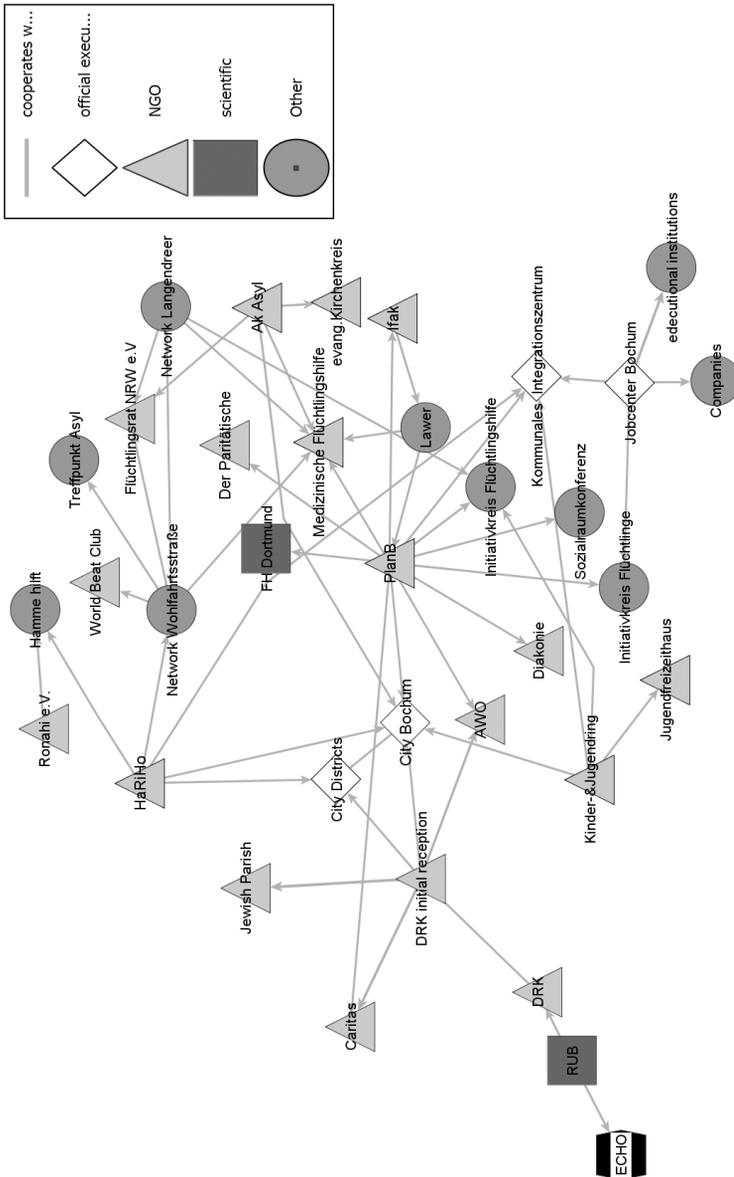
We exchange information in 'Sozialraumkonferenzen', or panels, with professional actors and try to identify the needs (HaRiHo 2016).

All interviewed organisations participate in several networks from both categories. Figure 1 shows the egocentric cooperation networks (see the first chapter of this book for more information on this term) of asylum-related organisations in Bochum according to their actor type. It includes only the eleven interviewed organisations and the cooperation partners they named and therefore does not show the complete network of asylum-related organisations in Bochum.

Figure 1 shows that the reconstructed part of the whole network (see the first chapter of this book) is fairly homogeneous relative to the actor type, because it includes 19 NGOs but only three GOs. Upon further analysis, it becomes clear that each actor has ties both to NGOs and to GOs and networks. Actors that are particularly well connected are PlanB (an NGO), the city administration (a GO), the Kommunales Integrationszentrum (a GO), the Medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe (an NGO) and NW (a network). All interviewed organisations cooperate with the city administration in some way. Hence, when viewed according to actor type, the egocentric cooperation networks show slight tendencies towards heterogeneity for all organisations, although scientific institutes and international actors play a minor role.

6 The Social Demographic Conference and the initiative Flight and Asylum are conferences that address issues related to asylum seekers, refugees and other groups on a regular basis.

Figure 1: Asylum-related organisations in Bochum, their cooperation partners and actor types



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

The aim of the website *Fluechtlingshilfe-Bochum.de*, which is run by the city of Bochum, is to provide a conclusive overview of asylum- and refugee-related activities in Bochum and lists relevant organisations according to their actor type. A total of 49 different organisations are divided into the following categories: registered society/organisation, which includes 19 organisations, 22 voluntary networks, and the city, which includes seven actors and two student projects (*Fluechtlingshilfe-Bochum.de*). Although the egocentric network for each organisation is quite heterogeneous, it follows that the overall landscape of asylum-related organisations in Bochum is dominated by NGOs and volunteer networks.

Table 4: Development of networks of asylum-related organisations in Bochum over time according to the actor type of the partners

Question: Is your network becoming rather homogenous or heterogeneous regarding the actor type of the partners?	
PlanB	Heterogeneous (but homogenous in terms of norms and values)
DRK	Not directly stated, but heterogeneous ⁷
Kinder- und Jugendring	Heterogeneous
HaRiHo	Heterogeneous
AK Asyl	Heterogeneous
NW	Heterogeneous
NL	Heterogeneous
Jobcenter	Heterogeneous

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

Considering that the network visualisation in Figure 1 shows only the situation as it stands in 2016, it is important to consider the evolution of these networks. Consistent with the results, most of the interviewed organisations stated that their networks have become more heterogeneous over time.

Figure 2 shows the egocentric cooperation networks according to the organisations’ spatial reach. Apart from the networks, most organisations are incorporated into internationally operating umbrella organisations such as the DRK and the Kinder- und Jugendring. However, their operational

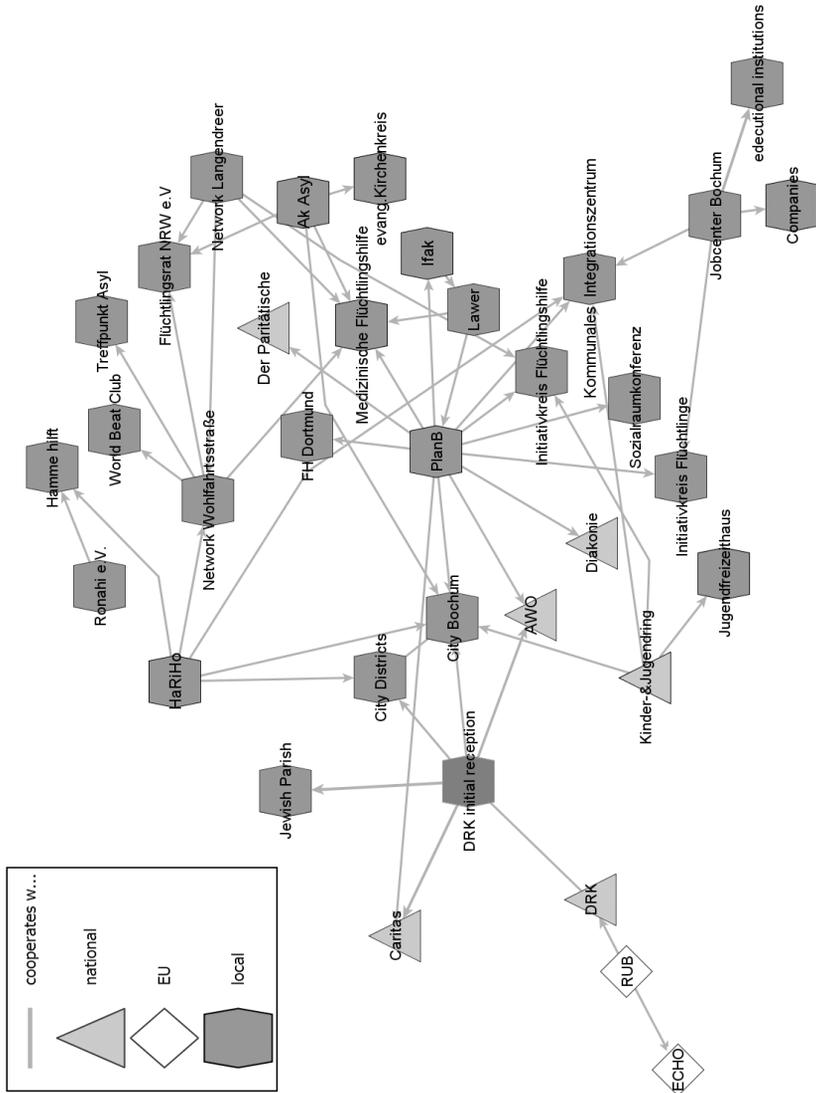
7 The answer is clear in the context of the questionnaire.

work is focused on the local level. The offices in Bochum operate on a local basis, and their activities, if any, are only loosely concerned with international agendas. Accordingly, the data suggest a tendency towards homogeneity within the cooperation networks regarding the spatial reach of organisations, so these organisations should be regarded as local organisations with an international background when one considers the spatial reach of their activities. Taking this into account, the only international organisation that appears in Figure 2 is the Office of the European Commission.

In the next step, the norms and values of asylum-related organisations in Bochum are analysed (Figure 3). In this case, one can differentiate a number of categories, including objective, religious, humanitarian and political/law enforcement.

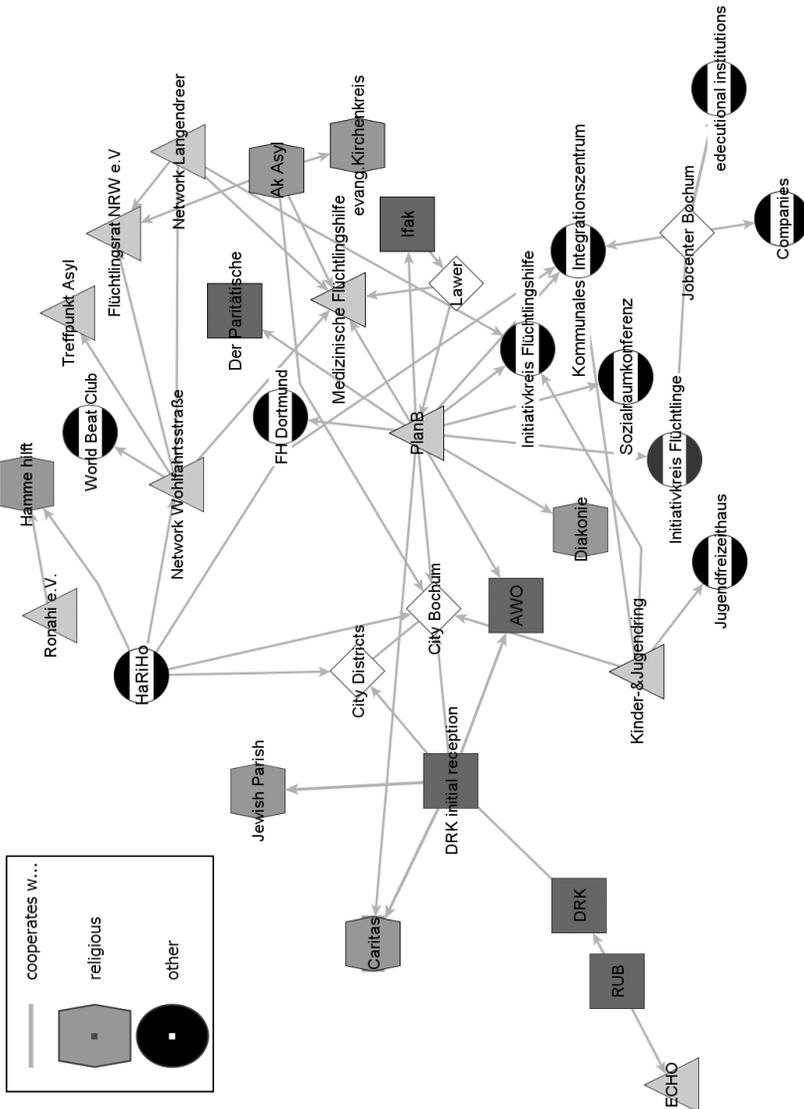
At first glance, the networks appear to be very heterogeneous, with all the categories listed above represented. This is because the visualisation takes into account only the main issues. Upon further analysis and based on the data from the expert interviews, however, it becomes evident that the organisations usually have more than one goal. They may, for example, have a religious background but consider themselves to be human rights-based and objective (see AK Asyl 2016). None of the norms and values shown in the visualisation seemed mutually exclusive for any of the interviewed organisations. All of them named at least two relevant categories when asked about their norms and values, and some stated outright that they prefer collaborating with actors who share similar values. Thus, the data show a tendency towards neither heterogeneity nor homogeneity.

Figure 2: Asylum-related organisations in Bochum, their cooperation partners and spatial reach



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

Figure 3: Asylum-related organisations in Bochum, their cooperation partners, norms and values



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

5.2 The roles of GOs, NGOs and Volunteers

The local work with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum is characterised by networks⁸ that rely mostly on volunteers.

It is great that there are aid networks located at every reception centre, covering all issues: sports clubs, church, youth groups (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).

All interviewed organisations conduct their work with the support of volunteers, and such support is perceived as vital for the integration and participation of asylum seekers and refugees.

The network would not exist without the volunteers. The administrations' employees that work in the reception centres often work part-time and have to provide care for 200 people at a time. They cannot coordinate everything. That's when they ask us for help [...]. The people in the network do everything for free. There are almost no salaried employees in the networks (NL 2016).

The social workers do ask us for help, for example, when a person needs translation [or] company when visiting a doctor (NL 2016).

The work Hamme Hilft does is very important for the people, especially as the state supplies only basic services when it comes to integration [of asylum seekers and refugees] (HaRiHo 2016).

NGOs also provide similar aid for asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum and sometimes fill a gap left by the state.

At the moment it is still the case that organisations, networks and volunteers carry the integration process. Without them, it would be incredibly difficult for the asylum seekers and refugees to settle down here (HaRiHo 2016).

Cultural institutes are also important for integration, because they offer a wide range of activities that allow the asylum seekers and refugees to participate in society (see e.g. HaRiHo 2016; PlanB 2016; AK Asyl 2016; NW 2016). However, RUB (2016) explains that NGOs are not as relevant as they should ideally be:

I think that international organisations, UNHCR and others are not being considered in an adequate way. [...] Their influence is relatively small when it comes to political issues. However, the support of these organisations is needed when it comes to the implementation, because they can help and this is very important (RUB 2016).

8 Refers to official networks, not ties between actors.

In contrast, the interviewed NGOs and official networks do not think that state organisations are having a positive influence on the situation.

State organisations play an enormous role, especially the BAMF, because we are here to correct the deficiencies the BAMF causes [...], especially state re-gimentation in the form of idleness (AK Asyl 2016).

The problem with the public institutions is that they depend on the administrative system, the political declarations, and the law, and this makes them in many areas not flexible (NW 2016).

5.3 Isomorphism

In keeping with the neo-institutional approach, the collected data implicate isomorphic processes with regard to the organisational cooperation networks of asylum-related actors in Bochum. In the following, we will highlight some aspects of homogenisation of cooperating organisations.

First, the organisations' criteria for cooperation were analysed with the result that the networking organisations tend to share the same philosophy, as already shown in Figure 3: they share the same norms and values; they are all humanitarian, non-radical, democratic organisations; and all the organisations we interviewed stated that among the criteria for not cooperating with each other are racism, fundamentalism and undemocratic driving norms.

The organisations we cooperate with must be democratic, antiracist and non-violent, just like us (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).

The cooperation partner should have the same philosophy such as neutrality and objectivity (DRK 2016).

They should think like us, have a humanistic approach and think in humanistic terms. We care about the person, not the colour of their skin or religion. We are independent from politics and religion (PlanB 2016).

Regarding this aspect, we observed tendencies towards homogeneity.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 155) noted that “*The greater the extent to which an organizational field is dependent upon a single source of support for vital resources, the higher the level of isomorphism*”. This is the case in Bochum, because all organisations receive some sort of funding from the city and government.

We are financed by project funds, by funds of the BAMF and by city funds (PlanB 2016).

Our work is funded by contracts with the city of Bochum (Ronahi 2016).

One part are resources from the city administration. That is the most important pillar of our finances, as well as funding from the federal state and state (Kinder-und Jugendring 2016).

Eventually, this homogeneity in funding might lead to a homogenisation of the organisations that deal with asylum/refugee-related issues (see the first chapter of this book).

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 155), another indicator of the extent of isomorphism within an organisational field is the education of staff and management: *“The greater the extent of professionalization [...], the greater the amount of institutional isomorphic change.”* The staff working for asylum-related organisations in Bochum predominantly have a background in the field of social studies, as evidenced in the following statements:

They are all qualified educators, social workers or social scientists (Kinder-und Jugendring 2016).

They are specialised staff from the full range of social work: social workers, social scientists, professional educators (PlanB 2016).

Therefore, there is homogenisation regarding the educational background of staff within the organisations, leading to a similar structure and strategies, both informal and formal. This also applies to the interviewed GO, Jobcenter, which noted that:

the qualification of our employees is changing. In the past, most of them had an administrative background. Today, more social scientists and pedagogues get employed (Jobcenter 2016).

Another point can be made concerning mimetic isomorphism, because there were indications of copying best practices. In theory, this happens for a number of reasons, notably the uncertainty of the environment and a desire to increase the chances of survival, which lead organisations to imitate other organisations' strategies and behaviour. One mechanism for accomplishing this is to mimic best practices (see: First chapter of this book):

We copied most of it from them [Netzwerk Wohlfahrtstraße]. We don't need to invent everything over again (NL 2016).

Yes, we do copy successful modi operandi (PlanB 2016).

We are strongly geared towards the Flüchtlingsrat NRW and their structures and strategies. We also adopt their practices, gratefully (AK Asyl 2016).

Even when there is no direct copying, there is at least an exchange of knowledge. In particular, information about strategies for dealing with is-

sues related to refugees and asylum seekers is often harmonised across organisations in Bochum.

It is important: How do other organisations deal with a problem? (Ronahi 2016).

PlanB and Kinder- und Jugendring also offer intercultural training for professionals and volunteers, which further promotes homogeneity (PlanB 2016; Ronahi 2016).

5.4 The European Level and CEAS

Starting with the assumption that the organisations we interviewed might perceive a gap between talk and action concerning official declarations and actual organisational behaviour, it became evident that there does indeed seem to be a discrepancy. Many of the organisations see a failure at the *top-down* EU level. Those in Bochum criticise the Dublin Regulation for being only arbitrarily enforced. As a predecessor of CEAS, the Dublin Regulation was regarded as being applied improperly during its time as a regulatory directive. For example:

The Dublin Regulation is applied only when it is useful. For some groups (Syria, Iraq) the Dublin Regulation gets ignored, and for some groups, which are wanted to leave, it will be applied (Ronahi 2016).

The Dublin Regulation is kind of a joke. If you applied the Dublin Regulation correctly, Germany would have nothing to do with refugees at all (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).

Concerning the establishment of CEAS, the collected data suggest that European law and regulations have not been implemented in reality. National laws regarding issues that concern asylum seekers and refugees are still in place instead of the contents of CEAS.

[The implementation of CEAS] is and has always been very slow. So was implementation of the qualification directive, [...] the last big change to our asylum system. It was an eternity before the subsidiary protection status was put into effect. I have the feeling that things take a long time when there could be a change for the better, and a change for the worse happens faster (Geisweid 2016).

Little gets implemented; it is shame that solidarity does not go that far. Germany itself did not care about the CEAS for years, because the asylum seekers ended up elsewhere anyway as a result of the Dublin Regulations (Ronahi 2016).

The EU level is too far away to have a common policy. Even in Germany there is not one common system (NL 2016).

Further statements show that the national and local authorities are to blame for not applying European laws:

The [EU] directives are known, but they have not been implemented yet. [...] The authorities stick to the national law, not to the European directives (Geisweid 2016).

You can notice a discrepancy between the different federal states. [...] There are families here who have been waiting for an interview eleven, twelve, 13 months. This is not acceptable. And it is sheer mockery when the federal and federal state government publicise that the average duration of proceedings often is five or six months (AK Asyl 2016).

When we analysed the data, we found a gap between talk and action, not only on the EU level but on the local level as well. National and federal regulations are not applied, as is also the case in Bochum.

There are about 300 children who are school-aged but have not gotten a place in school [...]. The Federal government failed to provide enough capacities, because it is not only a right for the children to attend school, but also a statutory duty to do so (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).

I think there is a lack of structuration in many areas. There is no structure. I experience this myself a lot. The BAMF, the municipalities and even the public authorities dealing with labour market access – everything is still very chaotic. There is, for example, no common system for registration (Jobcenter 2016).

NL (2016) adds that when caring for asylum seekers and refugees, NGOs sometimes have to fill the gap the state leaves,

especially in initial accommodation, where we do things that should be organised by the state. It is far from okay when doctors from our network must organise the medical care. This is a state responsibility. It is an expression of state failure when we have to do this (NL 2016).

None of the interviewed organisations regarded CEAS as something positive. The following statement by Kinder- und Jugendring sums up the main points expressed by the organisations:

In my opinion, the CEAS is inhuman. [...] The government's only goal is to keep refugees away from Europe. The objective is to keep people out of here and it takes liberty with the consequences of this action. This is public knowledge, and Amnesty International has exposed multiple cases. That Turkey deports persons to war zones, which violates the Geneva Convention, violates the European Convention on Human Rights, violates our reputed great Western values. This development is dramatic, with the headline 'Inhuman' (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).

5.5 Criticism and Suggestions

I don't know if the EU wants to fail in all cases. I have the impression that Europe does not believe in itself anymore, that the countries care more about their own interests instead of the community. I assert that [the EU] was an artificial construct, that the countries no longer believe in themselves (PlanB 2016).

The interviewed organisations mainly criticise the European asylum regime and its impact on the national asylum system.

The EASY system⁹ is a huge problem, [such as when] people who are in NRW, whose relatives are here, are moved to Bavaria near the Czech border where there's only one bus a day. They just sit there and wait. [...] The accommodation itself is a catastrophe. There aren't even those six bedrooms in the gyms anymore. There are sections, separated by paper towels. In the past, there were separate sections for women and men. Nowadays, this isn't considered anymore (Geisweid 2016).

Other points of criticism include the high level of bureaucracy and deficiencies in the asylum proceedings themselves. The interviewed experts further draw attention to shortcomings on the local level.

Bureaucracy is a big barrier, when you collaborate with public authorities and they say 'It has always been like this.' This inflexible system [is a problem]. Things coming from the city are progressing very slowly (HaRiHo 2016).

Our problems now are structural issues. You do not know where to start and how to continue. Also, the [lack of] transparency of target groups – not to know who comes and when they come, how many will they be. That you always work with a crystal ball. Those are our problems; financial means are widely available (Jobcenter 2016).

Then of course the duration of asylum proceedings [must be criticised]. The wait for filing an application [is too long]. They only receive a paper on which their status as an asylum seeker gets extended. They are held back for months or even years and nothing happens. It drives them crazy if they don't get any information (Geisweid 2016).

According to some organisations such as the Kinder- und Jugendring and DRK, the local administration fails to carry out sufficient work when dealing with asylum seekers and so does the federal government. Experts state that much improvement is needed.

9 The EASY system (*Erstverteilung von Asylbewerbern* [Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers]) distributes asylum seekers across Germany (BAMF 2016c). See also Section 1 of this chapter on the *Königsteiner Schlüssel*.

The situation of asylum seekers and refugees has to be improved significantly. It is preposterous that 17 gyms are still occupied. It is preposterous that asylum seekers are accommodated in gyms without any privacy for over 6 months. It is preposterous that asylum seekers who are geduldet¹⁰ basically do not have any chance to work, to earn something for themselves. It is a catastrophe that children cannot attend school. So there is a lot of work to do (Kinder- und Jugendingring 2016).

And now the [administration has] capitulated and does not believe in its own proceedings anymore. In my opinion, they simply gave up. There isn't any information anymore when asylum seekers are moved from one facility to another (DRK 2016).

Organisations demand that

the EU create a universal standard, distribute refugees fairly, not only accounting for number of inhabitants but also economic capability (Ronahi 2016).

It is important to make joint efforts. [...] The Dublin Regulation must be abolished. [...] Legal ways (of migration) should be created, so that people do not have to arrive by boat and drown. [...] The handling of asylum applications needs to be done more quickly (HaRiHo 2016).

We need international politics that think ahead for the next 50 years, because there will be many refugees to come [...] Germany should solve the problem together with the EU (RUB 2016).

Germans, asylum seekers and refugees should have the willingness to accept cultural values and not insist on only their own values. This is true for both sides (AK Asyl 2016).

However, the interviewed organisations maintain a positive mindset.

The system of welfare and social services works really well in Germany already. It is positive that the state does not aim to do everything, does not pull all the strings. That way we can introduce the humane aspects (PlanB 2016).

The experts also provide suggestions on how to improve the situation on all levels. They suggest that the federal government create legal means of entry and face up to its responsibilities.

Because at the moment there is an incredibly [high] number of wars in the world, incredibly many emergency situations, [...] there are many, many refugees. It is clear [...] that Germany has a responsibility in this and that we have to allow at least a proportion of those persons to come here. We are a rich country and certainly have more responsibility than a small country such as Lebanon for example (Kinder- und Jugendingring 2016).

10 *Geduldet* = tolerated, referring to asylum seekers who had their claim rejected but whose deportation was suspended; they are permitted to stay but with reduced entitlements (Lohre 2009).

Regarding the situation of asylum seekers and refugees, they propose that everyone who comes here should

be able to work from day one, ... to have their hand held and the opportunity to orientate themselves (Jobcenter 2016).

The participation of refugees can be improved in many cases: quick access to the labour market or generally more opportunities for work, which is also a national problem (HaRiHo 2016).

Society should also participate in the reception and integration process and keep an open mind towards migrants.

We have to give these persons the time to settle down, to warm up to our society. I expect from our society that we don't throw them off their guard, that we do not give them a feeling of 'You are here now, so we can show you how civilisation works.' They are already civilised, it's just another civilization (PlanB 2016).

According to the interviewed organisations, the work of the administration could be improved by providing more professional training and better networking of state actors.

I would like [to see] better networking within the city administration. I miss a network within the accommodation centres (DRK 2016).

Much more training [is needed] for those persons working for the administration. They have had the same jobs for decades. Mandatory training [would help] sensitise the staff. They are not pedagogues; they like numbers. But when it comes to humans, there has to be more education (HaRiHo 2016).

6. Conclusion

Our results show that the local structure of the system that deals with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum is dominated by local NGOs, which are perceived – and perceive themselves – to be of vital importance for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in the city. In Bochum, an extensive networking of asylum-related organisations is observed. All of the interviewed organisations participate in a number of networks, working groups and regular meetings to exchange information, ideas and best practices. In addition, there is a complex and extensive network of volunteers, which spans across the city and typically forms around the infrastructure of each individual reception camp, while maintaining links to both one another and to the professional organisations.

Our analysis of egocentric cooperation networks in Bochum revealed that they are rather heterogeneous with respect to the actor type of the organisations and are homogeneous with respect to their spatial reach; for each organisation on its own, the norms and values of the interviewed organisations were mostly multifaceted, but overall they were very similar when compared with one another. Isomorphic processes further substantiate the observed homogeneity. In the organisational field of asylum-related organisations in Bochum, these processes are especially prominent in terms of the way they are funded and the educational background of staff. All the organisations receive at least some of their support from city's federal funds or are otherwise tied to them through project funding. Relevant personnel, including those at the management level, are trained predominantly through some form of professional education program. This poses certain threats to efficiency measures and, more importantly, can lead to pressures of homogenisation on the local level. Homogeneity is further promoted in the selection of cooperation partners in that the interviewed organisations tend to prefer groups that share similar norms and values.

Based on these results, the first part of the hypotheses can partially be corroborated. Intensive networking on the local level does indeed take place. Isomorphic processes are indeed at work; however, the organisations still perceive a gap between talk and action on the local level. Although the organisations are increasingly intertwined and well informed about policy and *modi operandi* on a local level, this knowledge does not necessarily extend to higher levels. EU directives and therefore CEAS do not have a significant impact on the work of asylum-related organisations in Bochum, other than being a binding legal framework, a violation of which causes legal consequences. Moreover, we did detect a gap between talk and action on the EU level. The interviewees knew very little about CEAS, which gives way to the conjecture that pressure to alter the local administration's *modi operandi* will not be travelling upward. Hence, we should reject the hypothesis that homogenisation at the local level might exert pressure from below and cause the local city administration to adapt to the organisations' expectations, thus inducing change from below rather than from the EU level. However, because the MAREM project's work is focused on egocentric networks in selected cities only, it is impossible to draw conclusions that transcend the level of the interviewed organisations that are involved. With no data yet available on the complete cooperation network in Bochum, or even in Germany, more research will be needed in this area.

All in all, we can confirm the presence of a certain level of homogeneity due to isomorphic processes at the local organisational level in Bochum, with respect to the egocentric networks of selected organisations, as well as the presence of a gap between talk and action. The interviewed organisations share a critical view of CEAS and do not perceive it to have an effect on their operational work. However, based on this response, we cannot necessarily conclude that our findings can be generalised and applied to the national or EU level, nor do they imply general homogenisation across all asylum-related organisations in the whole of Bochum, Germany or even the EU.

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Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically:

DRK Bochum

Evangelischer Arbeitskreis Asyl im Kirchenkreis Bochum e.V.

HaRiHo - die Stadtteilerpartner

Heike Geisweid

Jobcenter Bochum

Kinder- und Jugendring Bochum e.V.

Netzwerk Flüchtlinge Langendreer

Netzwerk Wohlfahrtstraße

PLAN B Ruhr e.V.

Ronahi e.V.

RUB - Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict

Asylum-Related Organisations and their Cooperation Partners in Selected European Countries

Anna Mratschkowski

The six European countries discussed in this book are members of the European Union (EU) and, as such, may share similar political systems, standards of living and values. However, they also differ in size, geographical position and historical and economic characteristics – factors that influence their ability to receive and integrate asylum seekers and refugees who are fleeing to Europe. In the preceding chapters, we presented our analysis of the asylum situation in each of the countries selected for our study. This concluding chapter focuses on comparing these countries by examining their respective asylum systems, asylum-related situations and the work done by the local refugee-related organisations and their cooperation partners. Such a comparison is necessary for determining how successful each country is in receiving and integrating asylum seekers and refugees.

Each of the countries in the MAREM project – Italy, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Germany – plays a significant role in the European asylum system because of its geographical and geopolitical position. All of them are also likely to continue to be important destination points for people seeking protection in the future because of their various other features, such as established migrant communities, networks and other forms of organisation.

Characteristics of Studied Countries

Along with other factors mentioned below, the size of a country may be considered in estimating the potential number of immigrants that particular country can host, and may indicate how many immigrants can be successfully integrated into its local educational and pension systems, job market and so on. Specifically, Spain has the largest area (505,370 km²), followed in decreasing order by Germany (357,022 km²), Italy (301,340 km²), Greece (131,957 km²) and the insular states Cyprus (9,251 km²) and

Malta (316 km²). However, of the six countries being compared, Germany is the most densely populated, with a population of 81,1 million by the end of 2015.¹ Italy comes in second, with a population of almost 62,5 million, followed by Spain with 46,4 million. The population of Greece is only 11,5 million, that of Cyprus is 1,2 million and that of Malta is about 400,000. In addition, population density differs in each country (e.g. 84 people per km² in Greece vs. 1,361 per km² in Malta).

In addition to size and population, unemployment rates may also significantly affect a country's capacity to receive migrants. In countries that suffer from the effects of a high rate of unemployment, the willingness to host and welcome asylum seekers and refugees may not be as great as in countries with a rather low rate of unemployment. Among the group of countries we studied, Greece had the highest unemployment rate during the first half of 2016 (23,5%), with lower rates reported for Spain (19,6%), Cyprus (11,6%), Italy (11,4%) and Germany (4,2%); Malta has the lowest unemployment rate when compared with the other five countries (3,9%).²

In 2016, the number of first-time asylum applicants, the ratio of asylum applicants to inhabitants, the predominant countries of origin and asylum recognition rates all differed significantly from country to country. These results will now be analysed and are linked to each country's key characteristics, as shown in Table 1. For the most part, these numbers refer to 2016; only in the case of GDP per capita do we refer to 2015 data, and because these numbers are not expected to change dramatically over a period of one year, the lack of preliminary data for 2016 does not affect the general comparability of the data presented.

1 See https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/SocietyState/Population/CurrentPopulation/Tables/Census_SexAndCitizenship.html;jsessionid=7AF9A150FB3F9221A196FA86C5FD6EDC.cae3.

2 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries>.

Table 1: Main characteristics of the six countries studied in the MAREM project

	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany
Area (km²)³	505,370 (including Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla)	131,957	301,340	316	9,251	357,022
Population (mn)⁴	46,4	11,5	62,5	0,4	1,2	81,1
Population density per km²	93 ⁵	84 ⁶	207 ⁷	1,361 ⁸	126 ⁹	234 ¹⁰
Unemployment rate as of July 2016 (%)¹¹	19,6	23,5	11,4	3,9	11,6	4,2
GDP per capita (2015) (US\$)	25,864 ¹²	18,064 ¹³	29,867 ¹⁴	24,103 ¹⁵	22,903 ¹⁶	40,997 ¹⁷

3 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/326957/umfrage/flaechen-der-eu-laender>.

4 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253383/total-population-of-the-eu-member-states-by-country>.

5 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=ES>.

6 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=GR>.

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8 http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/sid_102A39E8C66197CF6E9DDF9D7E197FC4/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Laender/Malta.html?nnm=383178.

9 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=CY>.

10 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=DE>.

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12 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/19400/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf-in-spanien>.

13 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/14434/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf-in-griechenland>.

14 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/14438/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf-in-italien>.

15 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/312519/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-bip-pro-kopf-in-malta>.

16 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/234226/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-bip-pro-kopf-in-zypern>.

17 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/166224/umfrage/ranking-der-20-laender-mit-dem-groessten-bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf>.

	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany
First-time asylum applicants: Q1 + Q2 2016¹⁸	6,875	17,205	49,375	770	1,145	361,710
Asylum applicants per million inhabitants: Q1 + Q2 2016¹⁹	148	1,591	813	1,786	1,353	4,428
Main countries of origin²⁰	Syria, Ukraine, Palestine ²¹	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq	Nigeria, Gambia, Pakistan	Libya, Syria	Syria, Palestine, ²² Vietnam	Syria, Albania, Kosovo
Total recognition rate (%): Q1 + Q2 2016²³	71	21	36	85	71	68
Subsidiary protection rate (%): Q1 + Q2 2016²⁴	67	3	13	69	62	9
Refugee rate (%): Q1 + Q2 2016²⁵	4	18	5	11	10	58

18 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_time_asylum_applicants_Q2_2015_%E2%80%93_Q2_2016.png.

19 Adapted from <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7662180/3-22092016-AP-EN.pdf/22f5de3b-b5a8-4195-82fe-3072a4a08146>.

20 [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Five_main_citizens_hips_of_\(non-EU\)_asylum_applicants_2015_\(number_of_first_time_applicants,_rounded_figures\)_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Five_main_citizens_hips_of_(non-EU)_asylum_applicants_2015_(number_of_first_time_applicants,_rounded_figures)_YB16.png).

21 Referring to stateless persons originating from the occupied Palestinian territories.

22 Referring to stateless persons originating from the occupied Palestinian territories.

23 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

24 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

25 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany
Total decisions: Q1 + Q2 2016²⁶	4,515	4,520	47,505	830	1,100	256,680
Rejected decisions: Q1 + Q2 2016²⁷	1,310	3,555	30,510	125	325	82,450

Source: Adapted from the information provided by individual chapters of this book.

The composition of the main countries of origin may correspond in part to each country's geographical position, particularly when one considers that asylum seekers are fleeing war-ridden Syria and the ongoing conflicts in several African and Middle Eastern regions, Asia and Ukraine. Naturally, the locations of these conflicts and the possible escape routes will to some extent dictate the routes taken and the means of arriving (e.g. by boat); however, other factors should be considered as well, including high population densities (e.g. Malta) and size of territory, because these characteristics play an important role in determining the specific circumstances confronting each country and thus determining heterogeneous outcomes.

By July 2016, Greece had both the highest unemployment rate (23,5%) and the lowest GDP per capita (US\$ 18,064) when compared with the other countries studied. In contrast, Germany had by far the highest GDP (US \$ 40,997) and a very low unemployment rate (4,2%), and Malta alone showed slightly better unemployment results as of July 2016 (3,9%).

Individuals seeking protection in Spain are mostly Syrians, Ukrainians and Palestinians from Syria. The main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Greece are Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, whereas in Italy the majority of asylum seekers are from Nigeria, Gambia and Pakistan. In Malta, the main countries of origin are Libya and Syria, and most of the asylum seekers who arrive in Cyprus come from Syria, Palestine and Vietnam. The main groups seeking protection in Germany are Syrians, Albanians and Kosovars.

26 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

27 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

Cyprus and Greece are the countries closest to Syria, Cyprus being only 97 km west of Syria and Greece having several islands near the border of Turkey, which shares a border with Syria. Malta is 290 km south of Libya, and Spanish enclaves in Morocco are accessible via the African continent. Although Spain borders the sea, only a few asylum seekers arrived by boat in 2015;²⁸ most arrivals by boat as of October 2016 occurred in Italy (158,062) and in Greece (169,459).²⁹ Europe-wide, there has been a decrease in arrivals by sea: in 2015, there were 1,015,078, compared with only 347,098 so far³⁰ in 2016.³¹ Although Greece received the highest number of entries into Greek territory, Greece is used mostly as a transit country (Banulescu-Bogdan and Fratzke 2015: 1).

Regarding both asylum applications per million inhabitants and recognition rates in different countries during the first and second quarters (Q1 + Q2) of 2016, there were 813 applications in Italy, and the recognition rate was 36 per cent. In Greece, the recognition rate was 21 per cent in Q1 + Q2 of 2016, and the number of the asylum applications per million inhabitants was 1,591. In Spain, the number of asylum applicants in the first half of 2016 was 148 per million inhabitants, with a recognition rate of 71 per cent. In Germany, 4,428 applications per million inhabitants were recorded, while 68 per cent of applications were approved. Cyprus saw 1,353 applications per million inhabitants, with a recognition rate of 71 per cent. Malta had one of the highest first-instance recognition rates in Europe in the first half of 2016 (85%), facing 1,786 applications per million inhabitants.

Empirical Results of the MAREM Project

The following section summarises the main empirical results of the MAREM research project undertaken in 2016 and involving six selected EU countries. First, we focus on each nation's characteristics and the status of its asylum procedure and on the work of asylum-related organisa-

28 <http://www.unhcr.org/mt/charts>.

29 http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php#_ga=1.241080067.145257414.1454063806.

30 Date of reference: 11/27/2016.

31 http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php#_ga=1.241080067.145257414.1454063806.

tions and their cooperation networks. We then proceed to discuss the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in each country.

National Characteristics, Asylum Procedures and Work of Asylum-Related Organisations and Their Networks

Spain. The networks of asylum-related organisations in Madrid are heterogeneous with regard to their actor types and spatial reach, although the majority of these actors share similar driving norms and values. Indicators of isomorphism can be identified in the refugee-related organisational field of Spanish organisations, in that their staff members have similar educational backgrounds. These organisations and their partners exchange experiences and rely on funding from the government, which can lead to the assimilation of different actors to one another. Larger and older organisations tend to choose strategic partners. With regard to the implementation of the asylum system on the operational level, we see a gap between talk and action. As a rule the asylum procedure in Spain is prolonged (two years instead of the three months proposed by law), and some organisations focus on push-back practices at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla. Experts state that CEAS in Spain exists on paper only and that funding for asylum-related projects is limited.

Greece. Regarded as one of the main entrance points of the EU, Greece has to face an uncertain and ever-changing asylum situation that is shaped mainly by EU-level decisions. For people on the move, there is no legal way of migrating. Experts report a lack of good hygiene and medical care in the detention centres, and the Greek asylum system fails to provide residence permits and financial aid. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serve in place of government services, and in this context cooperation among the asylum-related organisations is very important. Organisations share their expertise and resources, and a certain degree of homogeneity is evident in terms of the educational background of their staff. Many organisations build their networks with a focus on one project to raise awareness in Greek society and to put pressure on asylum-related politics. In most cases, cooperation between NGOs is not official but instead consists in informal, ad hoc cooperation networks that have expanded over time. Many new NGOs have emerged in response to the refugee crisis. Cooperation networks lean towards heterogeneity with regard to relevant features

of the actors, but there is also a tendency towards homogenisation, as is evident in the similar educational backgrounds of the organisations' staff and their driving norms.

The interviewed experts state that the Greek government shows good intentions towards improving the asylum system but is currently unable to cope with the situation. There are apparent structural deficiencies that make the situation in the country even more difficult. As a tendency of isomorphism, many NGOs deliberately dissociate themselves from the government so they can remain independent and criticise the government's actions. They do not want to collaborate with the state for fear of losing their credibility. However, their reliance on government funding leads to a general feeling of dependency. Tendencies towards mimetic isomorphism are evident in the organisational field – that is, actors tend to copy the others' best practices, with new organisations in particular orientating themselves to the older ones. Well-established organisations, however, rely mostly on their own practices. Although there is a discernible gap between talk and action within organisations, a gap certainly exists regarding the implementation of CEAS.

Greek officials and the European border control agency Frontex have reported human rights violations against asylum seekers in detention camps. Greece is considered the weakest link when it comes to managing the European refugees because of the poor state of its asylum system, its very low recognition rates, human rights violations and pending procedures because of the state's inability to document, register and process the high number of asylum seekers. To improve the situation, a new Ministry for Migration Policy was created. Of major importance for the asylum situation in Europe was the EU–Turkey agreement of 2016, which greatly decreased the number of arrivals in Greece.

Italy. In Italy, NGOs play a fundamental role in defending migrants' rights. As with Greece, the state is not able to fulfil its duties, resulting in a gap between talk and action. Governmental organisations (GOs) play a leading role in the asylum system, and NGOs must adapt to and accept this hierarchy while also trying to fill the gap between talk and action left by the Italian state. Asylum-related actors are well connected to one another, establishing and working in heterogeneous networks in terms of the organisations' tasks and services. Because of the many asylum seekers arriving by boat and the many deaths at sea, rescue missions have been implemented, and these rescue-at-sea operations are strictly defined by a network of formal agreements among the organisations. Triton, the rescue

mission led by Frontex, currently operates in the Mediterranean Sea, which replaced the former Mare Nostrum mission. In response to the large number of asylum seekers arriving in Italy, special relocation centres – ‘hotspots’ – were established, which are located along the coast and are run mainly by EU agencies such as Frontex and EASO. Three of these hotspots are currently operating in Italy, and in 2015, 144 people were relocated in this way.

Malta. The Maltese organisations show a high degree of homogeneity with regard to hiring and employing staff. Isomorphic processes are at work in the asylum-related organisational field. As in the other countries we studied, the organisations in Malta exchange best practices. The asylum-related organisations also attempt to institutionalise cooperation with one another. Their networks are diverse, and cooperation and exchange increasingly occur on the European level. Although the incorporation of CEAS into Maltese law has enhanced cooperation among these organisations, difficulties continue to exist regarding access to the labour market, legal aid and information policy. Although its office is in Malta, EASO has little influence, if any, on the Maltese asylum-related actors.

Cyprus. The situation in Cyprus is similar to that in Malta. NGOs fill the gap left by the state and play a major role in both the reception and the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The Cypriot NGOs are well connected, but more cooperation with the government is needed. Although the asylum system is designed to meet EU standards, integrating migrants into the labour market is difficult. CEAS is regarded as ambiguous: in general, the organisations welcome a common approach, but they criticise CEAS for not meeting the needs of each individual country. As CEAS slowly begins working on the European level, the Cypriot organisations believe they are not influenced by its regulations, owing in part to the fact that most Cypriot asylum-related organisations and their cooperation partners operate on a national level. Most of their cooperation networks are based locally and nationally and have stopped expanding. The organisations orientate themselves to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and have developed a kind of burden-sharing in the way they divide their field of work, specialise in different tasks and share their respective knowledge and experience. Cypriot NGOs try to fill the gap between the government’s actions and the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The regular asylum procedure in Cyprus usually requires a maximum of six months, but now an accelerated procedure has specific time limits for the final decision and for submitting an appeal, which may shorten the waiting time.

This procedure is expected to be part of national legislation but has not yet been put into practice.

Germany. In Germany, NGOs also play an important role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees and sometimes even fulfil state duties. The state outsources some tasks to NGOs, which address them with the help of many volunteers. In Bochum, intense networking among asylum-related organisations is evident. They exchange information and often copy the best practices of other actors, contributing to the isomorphic processes in the asylum-related organisational field. The networks of these organisations tend to be homogeneous in terms of their spatial reach, driving norms and values. In contrast, networks are rather heterogeneous when it comes to actor type. A gap between talk and action can be observed mostly with regard to the treatment and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. In the experts' opinion, the CEAS standards are not yet being implemented and properly applied in Germany.

Implementation of CEAS

Although the asylum systems in the six countries generally function in accordance with the CEAS directives, their practical implementation varies from country to country and is not regarded as successful by most experts in the countries we studied.

Greece. The Greek state appears to be unable to implement the CEAS guidelines on its own. National authorities used to control the Greek asylum system, and the police were previously responsible for some of the asylum decisions. Inhuman living conditions of asylum seekers in Greece have been reported, and experts consider the asylum system in Greece to be insufficient because of various human rights violations. Moreover, medical and hygiene provisions are lacking, and even the minimum standards in the Greek camps are not met.

Spain. Many organisation members in Spain also regard the asylum system in their country as insufficient. As is the case in the other countries, Spain is implementing the European directives based on its capacity and willingness to cope with newcomers, even if many experts claim that Spain is more than prepared to receive new asylum seekers. This country's relative unwillingness hinders the proper implementation of CEAS and of laws related to asylum.

Italy. The idea of CEAS is to render the EU an area of protection and to ensure humane reception conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in Europe; however, this right does not at present seem to be entirely granted in Rome, Italy. It is reported that the asylum seekers and refugees are forced to live under bad conditions in the detention centres. According to the results of our interviews, CEAS does not yet seem to have been successfully implemented by the Italian state.

Cyprus. In Cyprus, implementation of CEAS has had an impact on how the work of the asylum-related organisations is being carried out rather than on their work per se. Although CEAS does not seek to influence the philosophical background or working practices of these organisations, it does make sure that their scientific work and research adapt to European standards. Therefore, a gap between talk and action is evident. From the experts' perspective, the national asylum system in Cyprus can be criticised for its poor performance when it comes to handling asylum applications, which does not conform to European standards. Despite certain gradual changes, implementation of the CEAS is still not complete. The EU member states interpret the CEAS guidelines in different ways, and their asylum systems have been standardised only to some degree. Before the Cypriot state authorities took over and implemented their asylum system when Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, the UNHCR had been responsible for the country's asylum-related procedures.

Malta. With regard to CEAS, the situation in Malta is comparable to that in Cyprus. Despite its impact on the practical implementation of the new directives as well as several practical changes in asylum-related issues, CEAS has not been completely implemented in Malta, and gaps persist.

Asylum-Related Actors

The aim of the MAREM project was to collect and analyse data from different asylum-related actors. As shown in Table 2, it was not possible to cover all the actor types in every country or every city. Generally speaking, it was somewhat easy to reach NGOs, and most were willing to participate in interviews and share their own views. In contrast, it was much more difficult to find GOs willing to be interviewed and share specific information and could also speak English (although in Cyprus and Malta, English is one of the official state languages). Another challenge was find-

ing scientific organisations that study asylum-related issues in the relevant cities. Many researchers focus on the issues of migration and integration, but in general asylum issues are not often targeted. Thus, our results should be interpreted with great care. Because the data we collected is limited in terms of the time periods, actors and cities covered, we have been able to study only segments of the whole picture and to show only selected tendencies.

Table 2: Number of interview partners in the countries covered by the MAREM project

Interviewees	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany	Total
NGOs	6	7	7	1	5	6	32
GOs	2	1	—	5	1	1	9
Scientific organisations	1	2	—	—	—	1	4
Other	—	—	2	1	—	3	7
Total	9	10	9	7	6	11	52

Source: Adapted from the chapters of this book.

Conclusion

This book describes the work of asylum-related organisations, their cooperation partners, criticisms and proposals and will thus enhance our understanding of the asylum-related situation in Europe. During the MAREM project, we only analysed the egocentric networks of organisations, revealing the main connections between actors. This leaves it relatively unclear which actors do not cooperate with one another. Moreover, we were able to consider only some elements of the network dynamic. For these reasons and in order to explore this complex subject more fully, future research should focus on entire networks and their dynamics.

Reference

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