

Damla Askel (Koc University, Turkey) tells us about what the team have been up to over the summer

We're involved in WP4, WP5 and WP6, so there are two work packages where we conduct empirical research in the field and another one with archival data collection. For WP4, we're looking at bordering practices in Turkey, conducting interviews with stakeholders and migrants. For our work at WP6, we're focusing on responsibility sharing and solidarity in relation with the management of migration in the context of Turkey-EU relations. And finally for WP5, we're focusing on the politicisation of how the taking of responsibility on the management of migration and asylum takes place, by looking at parliamentary debates and media archives.

So how's the research going?

It's going well, but of course it has been difficult over the summer to find interviewees especially with stakeholders and officials. And already we've been asked to get permission by the DG for Migration Management - so if you want to do research on migration in the field in Turkey you need authorization from the state, so we've been waiting for that. And we've had snap elections which also delayed the process. But then it went smoothly and especially on the bordering issue, it was smoother than we expected as the coastguard was very open to doing interviews with us and they helped us a lot. We hadn't expected as much support from their side. A key challenge has actually been reaching IOs and NGOs to interview, which I'd expected to be a lot easier.

What have been the key findings?

Yeah actually there are a lot of criticisms amongst not only Turkish policymakers, but also the public in general and other stakeholders vis a vis the EU and the member states' approach to how the migration issue has been dealt in general. It was mentioned frequently by the interviewees but also we have seen that when analysing the media, public opinion and parliamentary data for WP5. There was a comparison to what Turkey did – hosting more than 3.5 million asylum seekers and refugees - and the fact that the EU member states couldn't decide on their relocation scheme. And of course there are criticisms by certain opposition groups towards the Turkish government, for agreeing to sign the Turkey-EU Statement. One thing that struck me was about the change in the migration and asylum policy in Turkey in 2014



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- until then we didn't have a legally binding document on asylum. In the context of harmonisation with the EU, Turkish bureaucrats and policy makers came up with this law determining the conditions and principles on how to manage migration and asylum. And it is considered as very liberal, except for the clause on the geographical limitation. And some of the people who have been active in the writing process of this document argue that they have produced this nice law in relation to the harmonisation with the EU around 2014; but when they look at the conditions today, they see that the EU has shifted from its own fundamental norms and values, which made them enact the law in the first place. So there is a feeling of unreliability to some extent.

And what are you up to next?

We're going to be finishing with the interviews for WP4 and WP6. For WP4, we have interviews with asylum seekers and refugees and I've already contacted people to facilitate the snowballing process. It's usually not that difficult in Turkey to find people to interview in terms of asylum seekers. We have some other officials to talk to for WP6 as well. We're excited for the next steps!