Forum: GA2 Social and Humanitarian Committee

Issue: Implementing measures to tackle the consequential spread of extremist ideologies in Europe as a consequence of the refugee crisis

Student Officer: Eda Gönül

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

The recent dissemination of extremist ideologies across Europe has become a major security concern for the members of the European Union. The widespread of radicalization movements has resulted in many variations of extremist groups in the face of a refugee crisis. As waves of refugees escaping persecution and armed conflict in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have sought asylum within European borders, the socio-cultural setting in the region has undergone certain shifts. The sudden change has caused challenges for social integration and cohesion.

The sudden overflow of refugees in Europe caused the failure of integration policies, leaving groups vulnerable for extortion. This led to radicalistic movements across the region. In accordance with the spread of such ideologies, far-right extremist groups, which support anti-immigration sentiments, became most common amongst trends. Accordingly, the refugee crisis brought about a cultural shock along with ethno-nationalist extremism which reinforced the exclusion of minority groups who are perceived as a threat to the dominant culture.

Given the history of conflict in Europe, the spread of these ideologies has created a hostile environment for refugee groups to live in. This created social, political and financial setbacks for the countries and groups involved. Consequently, the deteriorating state of the region created a chain reaction that fueled extremist groups to rebel against the situation.

Definition of Key Terms

Extremism

Extremism is a politically used umbrella term for the activities which exceed and are hostile towards the norms of states, reject democracy and social order. The term can be defined under various subjects; politically, sociologically and psychologically. However, the general understanding refers to extreme acts that rise from intolerance of certain groups.

Radicalization

Radicalization refers to the process of deviating from general norms by extremes, mainly politically or socially applied. Separate from extremism, radicalism opposed the constitution of states rather than behaving hostile against it.

Far-Right Extremism

Far-right extremism revolves around nationalism, xenophobia and, in some cases, fascism. Right-wing extremists usually oppose multiculturalism and diversity amongst nations. These groups are the most common when it comes to the issue at hand.

Left-Wing Extremism

The left-wing of extremism is used for the groups who are anti-capitalist and anti-nationalist. This ideology supports radical social change with opposition towards oppressors and authority figures among society.

Religious Extremism

Religious extremism supports a range of ideologies which aim to establish religious rule through violent means. Certain groups supporting this ideology carry out acts of terrorism in the face of political grievances.

Ethno-Nationalist Extremism

Ethno-nationalist extremist groups commonly prioritize the people of a particular ethnic or national group. Accordingly, ethnic separatism, racial supremacy, or ethnic cleansing movements are promoted through this ideology.

Refugee

A person who has been forced to flee their country to escape war/persecution.

Background Information

The increasing number of refugees across European countries has consequently resulted in the citizens of the involved countries to develop anti-immigrant ideologies. In accordance with this, certain acts of violence and vandalism occurred across the region. Attacks in Paris and Brazil as a result of the refugee crisis fueled the public's fear of terrorism in their countries. This led the public to perceive the increasing number of refugees and terrorism as an economic burden. Therefore, the idea which links crimes to refugees formed. As an opposition and a reaction from the public, extremist propaganda, which stood in the way of societal cohesion, began spreading.

2015 European Refugee Crisis

In 2015 a significant number of refugees fled from North Africa and the Middle East to Europe, seeking refuge in the face of war and expulsion. The main event which triggered the overflow of asylum seekers was the Syrian Civil War and instability in other regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and North Africa in 2015.

As previously mentioned, terrorism is an important factor to consider for this outcome. The MENA region has a history of acts of terrorism such as bombings, assassinations and armed assaults (Stroobants, "Terrorism in the Middle East and North African Region"). As these attacks' main targets were the civilian population, the region became inhabitable for many. Specifically for some countries such as Syria, air strikes, armed offenses and many kidnappings occurred. Therefore, staying in their home countries became a security threat for individuals which is why millions fled across the mediterranean to not only European countries but mainly to Turkey as well.

Asylum claims in Europe, 2015

Total EU claims*
1,321,560

Finland
Norway
Sweden
UK
Belgium
Germany
Poland
France
Austria Hungary
Switzerland
Romania
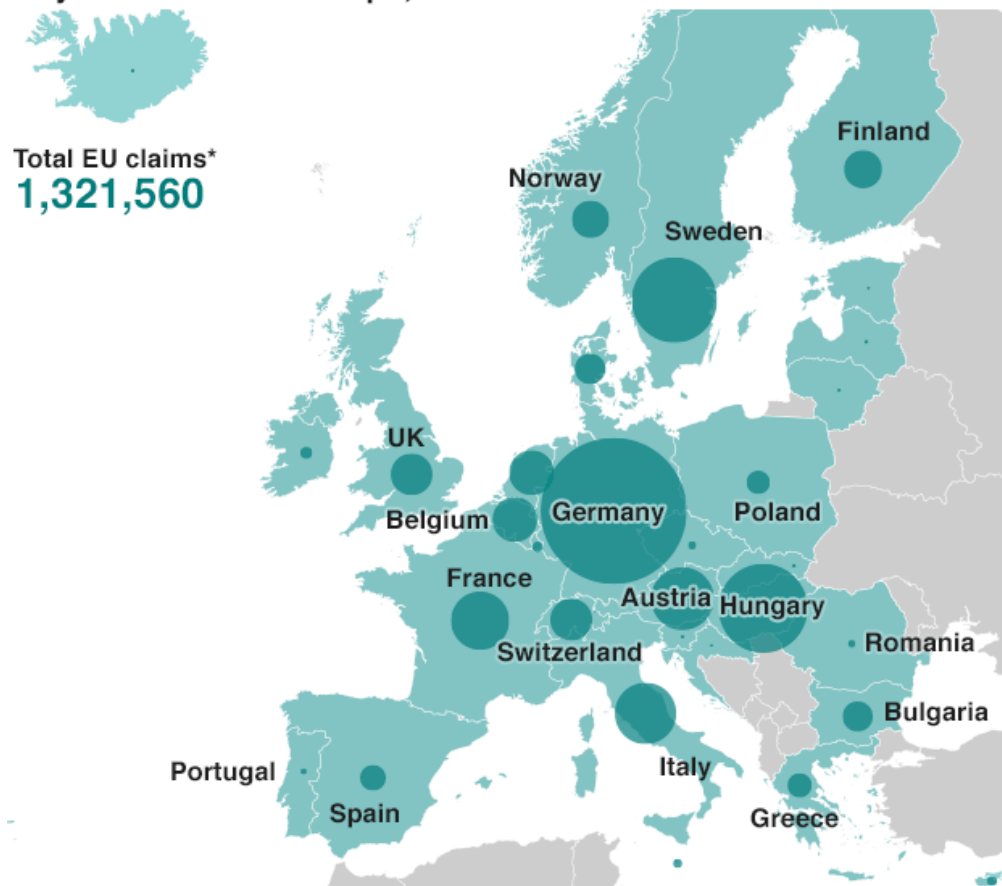Bulgaria
Portugal
Italy
Spain
Greece

Figure 1: A map showing the number and distribution of refugees in Europe during the Refugee Crisis in 2015 (bbc.com "Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts")

According to the estimate of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) millions of asylum seekers arrived in Europe both by land and by sea during the conflict in the Middle East. During the migration, many died under the severe conditions while passing the Mediterranean Sea. The already oppressing state of refugees which arrived in Europe due to the harsh conditions in their countries and the journey through the Mediterranean put them in a vulnerable position for extremist groups to coerce. In the aftermath of the crisis, many were displaced within the region which increased the complications between the minority groups and the general public. These complexities led to the formation of extremist groups that rebel against the governing bodies of their countries due to the increasing number of refugees.

Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU

First-time applications in 2015, in thousands

Country	
Syria	
Afghanistan	
Iraq	
Kosovo	
Albania	
Pakistan	
Eritrea	
Nigeria	
Iran	
Ukraine	

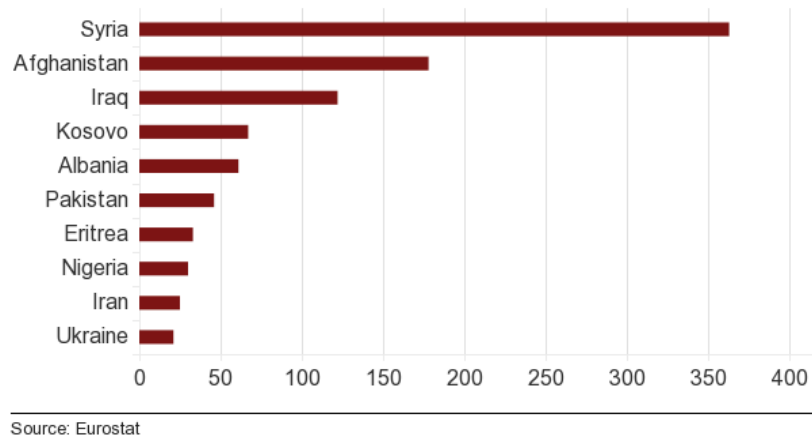0   50   100   150   200   250   300   350   400

Source: Eurostat

Figure 2: Statistics on the number of people who migrated to Europe and their origins

(bbc.com *"Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts"*)

Spread of extremist propaganda and political polarization

The clash of both ideologies and ethnic groups have resulted in polarization within the nations involved. The multicultural structure which the refugee crisis brought about led to social fragmentation which certain extremist groups took advantage of. Protests and acts of vandalism across Europe occurred as a tool for extremist propaganda which raised security concerns. Accordingly, the European Union took certain measures with the aim to relieve the situation.

The exceeding number of refugees causing a social and political shock in Europe raised the fear of terrorism and decreased job availability amongst citizens. The arriving refugees occupied a number of job opportunities and social benefits. Consequently, the public strongly opposed the current situation although some countries such as Sweden and Germany stated that the refugees made their nation stronger due to the increased number of working people in the country (pewresearch.org "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015")
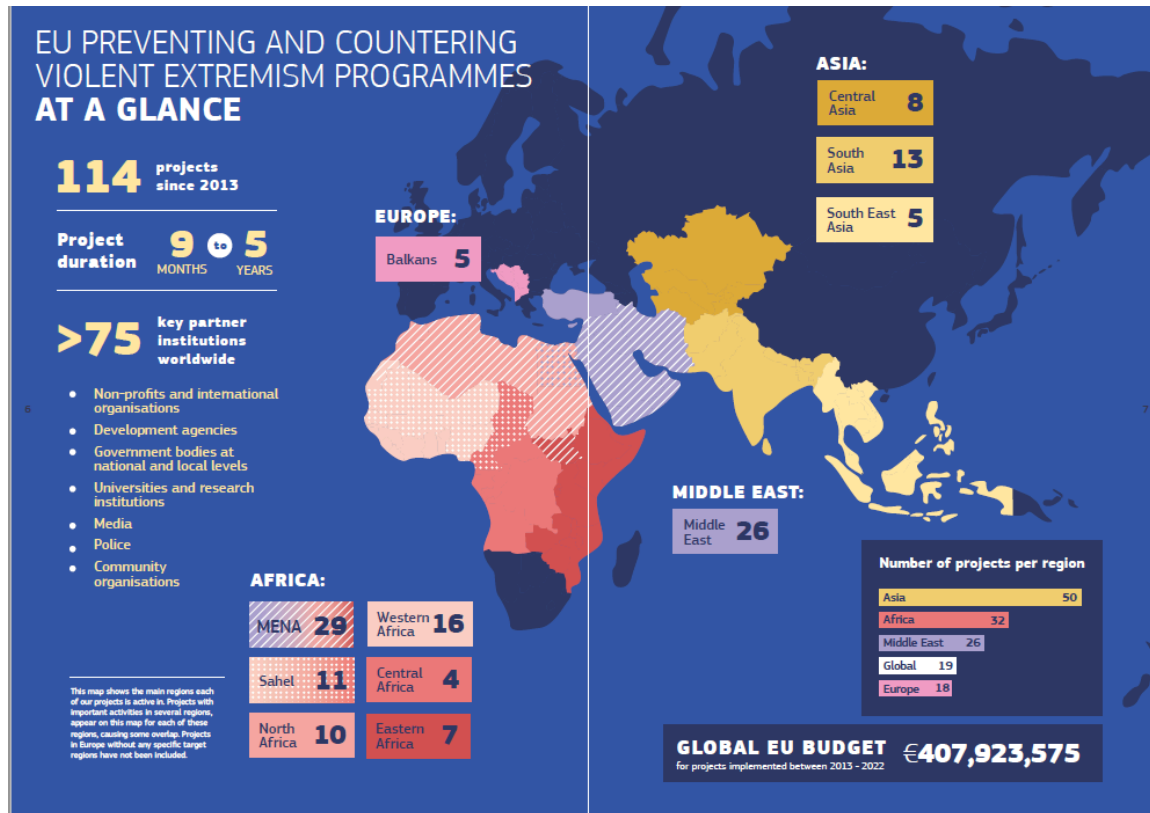
Figure 3: A map showing the European Union's current approach to violent extremism
(fpi.ec.europa.eu "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Stories from around the globe")

Violent right-wing extremism in Europe

Right-wing extremist groups generally form around the opposition of the cultural and socio-economic state in their country. The changes that the number of refugees lead to is the general cause behind these groups' rebellion. Far-right extremist groups can be further categorized in accordance with violent and passive behavior. In the cases where passive extremist groups who simply raise their voice about their disturbance of the topic are protected under freedom of expression. Since this right is the one of the most safeguarded norms around the world, "extremist groups and individuals that promote racism, intolerance, xenophobia etc. are quite well 'protected' too" (Sotlar 2004). On the other hand, certain groups or individuals maintain a violent attitude by spreading hateful or illegal material that promotes harmful extremist views. These actions have raised the concerns of the European Union and the other parties involved.

In 2019 far-right radicalist groups from different parts of Europe gathered together to form an umbrella organization under Fortress Europe. These groups included extremist parties from Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Czechia, Hungary and France. These organizations then carried on to pursue right-wing propaganda against governments and refugees. These actions shaped the public's view on refugee groups. Therefore, the acts committed by extremists not only affected the minority groups but also shaped the general perception of citizens who were initially passive when it came to the view on refugees in their country. Furthermore, certain groups alongside the right-wing parties are also present; however, since they are unrecognized by governing bodies, any particular name cannot be given accordingly. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the presence of organized individuals since they take part in a significant component of extremist activities (globsec.org "Mapping Right-Wing Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe").

Ethno-nationalist and separatist movements

Ethno-nationalism is a significant component of extremist ideologies. There are certain extents to consider when it comes to this scope of the issue. Respectively, nationalist bodies had an opposing reaction to the incoming refugees in the region. Considering the history with xenophobia and ethnic cleansing, the occurrence of ethno-nationalist movements which aimed to separate the minorities from the general public raised a lot of concerns. The aim of this ideology follows an anti-immigrant demeanor which created political instability within the nations involved. As a part of these movements, acts of discrimination, harassment, and violence were perpetrated by ethno-nationalist extremists. Therefore, it is essential to consider the risks that these contradictory views may result in. Accordingly, these risks include potential armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing, terror attacks and attacks on civilians. To summarize, the ethno-nationalist extremists generally follow the same path with right-wing extremism; therefore, it is important to handle both components collectively (ojp.gov "Some Problems with a Definition and Perception of Extremism within a Society").

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

European Union (EU)

As Europe has received millions of refugees in the past few years, the trend of extremist ideologies has drastically caught the European Union's attention. Resultantly, the European Union has conducted a two-year strategic orientation on a coordinated EU approach for the prevention of radicalization for 2022-2023. This plan has been established in alignment with the Counter-Terrorism agenda which the EU adopted in 2020. Through the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) European Commission, the party has worked for those who are in a vulnerable state for radicalization and aimed to ensure their safe living conditions. The European Commission has also funded projects to stand against violent extremism and terrorism. The approach of the EU to the issue mainly follows the thematic priorities of the member states.

Germany

Germany is the country which has received the highest number of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. Germany has accepted approximately one million refugees in 2015 and therefore has become majorly involved with the extremist movements conducted in Europe. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Refugee Crisis, many migrants were displaced within Europe across different countries. Respectively, Germany received further immigration during this process as well.

Hungary

Hungary has received the second highest number of refugees during the crisis in 2015. Hungary has opened its doors to many migrants; however, many have also migrated from Hungary to other European countries after the Refugee Crisis. Therefore, Hungary has played a key role when it comes to the enforcement of the coordinated EU approach for the prevention of radicalization for 2022-2023. Hungary

has also taken initiatives to measure the effect of refugees on their national identity. These include Hungary's participation in the European Commission's adoption of the 2021-2027 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund as well as the exercise of the EU Strategic Orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalization.

Italy

Italy is yet another country which is most affected by the extremist ideologies that the Refugee Crisis brought about. As a result, Italian citizens mainly associated the increasing number of crimes with the incoming refugees. The country has raised its concern for this issue many times and holds an arguably restrictive view when it comes to the issue of refugees. However, a clear statement on Italy's view on this issue has never been made; therefore, although there are extremist groups present in the country, the government holds a complex outlook.

Greece

During the immigration process from the MENA Region to Europe, Greece held an important geographical role along with Turkey. Accordingly, as a part of the European Union, the country took certain steps to settle the refugees which entered the continent. Respectively, 160,000 refugees were relocated from Italy to Greece which was an important action towards stabilizing the crisis.

Syria

The start of the Syrian Civil War led to the massive overflow of refugees in Europe. Over 6.1 million civilians have been displaced. A massive chunk of this number migrated to Europe under severe circumstances. Due to the ongoing war in Syria, the country holds the majority of the refugee groups in the European Migrant Crisis. Along with other countries in the MENA Region, the conflict in Syria causing the Refugee Crisis resulted in extremist groups to react both verbally and in violent manners.

Turkey

As Turkey is a neighboring country to Syria and geographically very close to the other countries involved in the MENA region, the country took on a significant number of refugees. This caused a massive cultural shock especially in southeast Turkey which is where the majority of refugees settled. Likewise with Europe, the general population stood against the increasing number of refugees. Therefore, Turkey underwent shifts and was heavily affected, adjusting to the significant changes including politically, socio-economically and culturally within the nation.

Timeline of Events

March 15, 2011	**The start of the Syrian Civil War**
2015	**European Refugee Crisis**
June 30, 2018	**European Commission's adoption of the 2021-2027 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**
October 12-13, 2021	**Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) Conference**
2022	**The fourth exercise of the EU Strategic Orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalization**

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g20/045/67/pdf/g2004567.pdf?token=lxbo0mkNkvo9DD7VQE&fe=true

  (Human Rights Council's report on Human rights impact of policies and practices aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism)

- https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/765945?ln=en&v=pdf

  (A world against violence and violent extremism : resolution 127 / adopted by the General Assembly 68th session)

- https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/817761?ln=en&v=pdf

  (A world against violence and violent extremism : resolution 109 / adopted by the General Assembly 70th session)

- https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1468984?ln=en&v=pdf

  (A world against violence and violent extremism : resolution 241 / adopted by the General Assembly 72nd session)

- https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/811359?ln=en&v=pdf

  (Human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council 30th session on 2 October 2015)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

As previously mentioned, the European Union took many actions to resolve the Refugee Crisis along with the spread of extremist ideologies. The member states have implemented many resettlement schemes across their borders for the refugees. Resettlement is a safe and legal alternative to unusual trips for asylum seekers which was taken into action in accordance with the guidelines of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Afterwards, the European Commission adopted an Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) with the aims of promoting societal cohesion between minority groups and the general public. This fund started in 2021 and is planned to be spread out across the region

until 2027. With the growing protests and violent extremism acts, the member states held a Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) Conference to address the issue with an invasive approach. Lastly, the EU has a two-year (2022-2023) Strategic Orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalization program that undertakes radicalization with a counter-terrorism agenda. To summarize, all of these attempts were helpful in solving this issue and none so much as failed but rather was not sufficient enough. Therefore, as a certain part of these attempts are still ongoing, it is important to take measures to improve these methods whilst still maintaining a collaborative goal.

Possible Solutions

It is important to consider two important aspects when it comes to this issue: addressing the refugee problem and addressing the spread of extremist ideologies in Europe. One of the urgencies to handle is establishing an integration process within society. This can be done through implementing comprehensive programs that provide refugees with access to education, language training, employment opportunities, and social services. However, when doing so, it is highly crucial to consider the public's stance and reaction when it comes to this approach. Furthermore, in doing so, finding funding resources, getting important parties and organizations to contribute is a key way of approaching this potential solution. Promoting communication between different ethnicities and religions in order to establish a mutual understanding between minorities and the public can relieve the drastic spread of extremism. These dialogues should be monitored and facilitated with the help of UN established bodies. Furthermore, looking at the past and the current on solving this issue, it can be beneficial to develop the attempts previously made. Lastly, any solution conducted towards solving this issue should consider all parties involved in order to reach an objective resolution.

Bibliography

2022-2023 Strategic Orientations on a Coordinated EU Approach to Prevention of Radicalisation for 2022-2023, home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/2022-2023 Strategic orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalisation_en.pdf. Accessed 7 Apr. 2024.

"Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2021-2027)." *Migration and Home Affairs*, home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/funding/asylum-migration-and-integration-funds/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2021-2027_en. Accessed 7 Apr. 2024.

Contemporary Manifestations of Violent Right-Wing Extremism in the EU: An Overview of P/CVE Practices, 2021, home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/98e71d43-b493-4d60-ad05-e2dea2930a33_en.

"The EU Response to Migration and Asylum: Topics: European Parliament." *Topics | European Parliament*, 30 June 2017, www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20170629STO78629/the-eu-response-to-migration-and-asylum.

Islam, Shada. *The Refugee "crisis" in the Middle East and North Africa*, www.friendsofeurope.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MIG_Factsheet_v4_web.pdf. Accessed 7 Apr. 2024.

Mapping Right-Wing Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe, www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/Mapping of Violent Right-wing Extremist Groups in Central and Eastern Europe report.pdf. Accessed 14 Apr. 2024.

"Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts." *BBC News*, BBC, 4
      Mar. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911.

"Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Stories from around the Globe."
      Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, 18 Mar. 2021,
      fpi.ec.europa.eu/news/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-stories-
      around-globe-2021-03-18_en.

Sotlar, Andrej. *Some Problems with a Definition and Perception of Extremism within a
      Society* , Dec. 2004, www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/Mesko/208033.pdf.

Spindler, William. "2015: The Year of Europe's Refugee Crisis." *UNHCR*, 8 Dec. 2015,
      www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2015-year-europes-refugee-crisis.

"Te Tari Taiwhenua: Department of Internal Affairs." *Countering Violent Extremism
      What Is Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content*,
      www.dia.govt.nz/Countering-Violent-Extremism-What-is-terrorist-and-violent-
      extremist-content. Accessed 7 Apr. 2024.

Wike, Richard. "Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer
      Jobs." *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*, Pew Research Center, 11
      July 2016,
      www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-
      will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/.