

CALL FOR PAPERS

RETHINKING THE EU'S COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES UNDER ITS NEW MIGRATION AND ASYLUM PACT

The European Union's Pact on Migration and Asylum represents a bold - if highly contested - development in the governance of migration and the management of irregular arrivals. A key lever within this is the intensified cooperation with Third Countries, driven by the strategic aims of preventing asylum seekers from reaching European territory and returning them to their region of origin. While the European Commission has framed this as "effective and coherent migration management" and "burden-sharing," it raises pressing questions around accountability, transparency, and the safeguarding of fundamental rights.

This call for papers, therefore, invites critical consideration on the theme of the **EU's cooperation with Third Countries under the Pact**. We welcome interdisciplinary contributions, particularly from the fields of law, political science, international relations, sociology, and migration studies. Empirical research from the key migration corridors is equally encouraged.

We particularly welcome abstracts addressing (but not limited to) the following themes:

Theme 1: Containment

The Pact establishes fast-track asylum and return procedures at the EU's borders, yet their feasibility remains in doubt. Empirical evidence shows that returns are diplomatically sensitive, operationally difficult, and often resisted by countries of origin. This theme invites critical reflection on the EU's externalisation of migration control. Are Return Hubs a practical solution or merely political currency? How is the EU implicated in facilitating pullbacks in Third Countries? What lessons can be drawn from arrangements in North Africa, the Western Balkans, and Turkey?

Theme 2: Accountability and Legal Frameworks

Legal frameworks have often been slow to adapt to the innovative ways in which states avoid responsibility for asylum claims. Expansive judicial interpretations have often been met with further evasion, particularly in the turn towards informal arrangements and privatisation - exemplified by recent deals with Tunisia and Egypt. We welcome contributions that explore these accountability gaps through novel legal and interdisciplinary lenses. If human rights and refugee law fall short, what alternative frameworks—such as international criminal law or financial crime—might better capture these dynamics? How might doctrines like jurisdiction, attribution, and positive obligations evolve to meet the challenges of externalised migration control?

Theme 3: The Politics and Political Economy of Cooperation

Debates around the Pact often centre on compromise, overlooking deeper strategic tensions. How does reliance on Third Countries—especially authoritarian regimes—affect the EU’s foreign policy autonomy? How do domestic politics in partner states shape the negotiation and durability of migration deals? We also invite analysis of the economic dimensions of externalisation. How do financial flows, procurement, and market incentives shape the legal and political architecture of cooperation? Who profits from the expanding industries of border technologies, surveillance, and migration management?

Theme 4: Perspectives from Third Countries and International Organisations

Papers addressing this theme should analyse and reflect on how non-EU actors experience, negotiate, and respond to the EU’s Migration and Asylum Pact. Contributions may address Third-country responses to EU externalisation policies, local impacts on migration governance, and effects on national sovereignty and human rights norms. They might also explore the role of international organizations in mediating, monitoring, or implementing cooperative arrangements. Finally, papers could explore how Third Countries exercise agency, form alliances, or resist EU initiatives, as well as how global institutions (e.g. UN agencies) influence or are challenged by the Pact’s evolving framework.

Please note the following timeline for participation:

- **Abstracts due: Friday, 30 January 2026**
- **Draft papers due: Monday, 10 August 2026**
- **A one-day workshop: University of East London, Thursday, 10 September 2026.**

Informal enquiries and questions can be directed to either: r.bhandari@uel.ac.uk or michael.j.geary@ntnu.no.

Abstracts should clearly articulate their unique (empirical/theoretical) contribution to the field. We encourage methodological diversity and innovation. Please submit your abstract using the following link: <https://nettskjema.no/a/552713>.

Workshop Travels/Accommodation Costs: The workshop, where draft papers will be discussed, is funded by the COST Action CA21120, [HIDDEN - History of Identity Documentation in European Nations: Citizenship, Nationality and Migration](#). We will reimburse travel costs to London for a limited number of people, and invited participants will receive a daily allowance (to cover hotel/subsistence/local travel), as per COST rules on travel and reimbursement. Visa costs will also be reimbursed (where applicable).

NB - Publication Plans: The organisers aim to publish the selected papers in a **special issue of an open access, high impact journal**.

Organisers: [Dr Romit Bhandari](#) (University of East London), [Prof. Michael J. Geary](#) (Norwegian University of Science and Technology – NTNU), [Dr Annalisa Meloni](#) (University of East London), and [Dr Susan B. Rottmann](#) (Özyeğin University).