

## Stranded on migration

More than 1.8 million migrants have come to Europe since 2014, mostly from West Asia and Africa. This has become a contentious electoral issue across Europe with right-wing populists capitalising on an anti-migrant sentiment for electoral gains. While migrant inflows have fallen since their peak in 2015-16, some countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece have each accepted 12,000-15,500 migrants this year alone. EU countries are now grappling with (and fighting over) the treatment of migrants within their territories and related policies. The temporary migrant resettlement system of 2015, which was formulated to distribute migrants across the EU, failed when many countries refused to meet their quotas. Migration is top of the agenda when leaders meet for a European Council meeting in Brussels today.

Earlier this month, Italy's Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, refused to grant *MV Aquarius*, a ship that had rescued 629 migrants, docking permission. The ship was finally allowed to dock at Valencia, Spain, after food had run out and the UN refugee body had made appeals. More than 600,000 migrants have arrived in Italy from Africa in recent years. Mr. Salvini wants to deport 500,000 of those who are in Italy, fix the migrant resettlement system, build migrant reception centres in Africa, and do away with the Dublin Regulation which says refugees must apply for asylum in the EU country where they first landed.

More than 1.6 million migrants have made their way to Germany since 2015, the bulk of them arriving when Chancellor Angela Merkel suspended EU migration rules in 2015 to accept migrants stranded in other countries. This issue has since been used to attack Ms. Merkel politically, and last year helped the far-right Alternative for Germany win seats in the German parliament for the first time. It now threatens the coalition government headed by Ms. Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU), with Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who heads the Christian Social Union, the CDU's Bavarian sister party, saying he will not allow migrants registered in other countries to enter Germany. Mr. Seehofer has given Ms. Merkel until the end of this week to secure an EU deal on migration, an outcome that Ms. Merkel has said is unlikely. If Mr. Seehofer follows through on his proposal, it is likely to get him sacked, putting the governing coalition at risk.

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