

Vienna Lecture on the European Union

The Role and Accountability of EU Agencies in Managing the EU's 'Refugee Crisis'

(Abstract overleaf)

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Centre for European Integration Research (EIF)

online

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Moderation: **Gerda Falkner**, Head, Centre for European Integration Research (EIF), Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

This lecture will be held in English, questions can also be asked in German.

Please register via eif@univie.ac.at
and we will send you the link to the virtual event shortly beforehand.

Abstract

The emergence and institutionalisation of EU agencies has been widely studied by EU scholars. What has received less academic attention, however, is what role EU agencies play in managing the so-called EU's 'refugee crisis'.

This holds particularly true with regard to the EU's hotspot approach as one of the key EU responses to the crisis. This lecture examines the establishment and implementation of the EU hotspot approach in Italy and its operational reliance on EU agencies. Building on and extending the conceptual framework of the European Administrative Space (EAS), we show how Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) have strengthened both their independent administrative capacity and integration within the EAS. To get a more comprehensive understanding of the role of EU agencies within the Italian hotspots, we also discuss two important yet widely neglected features of administrative governance, namely the agencies' mandate and interagency cooperation.

From the outset, Frontex has been heavily criticized for disregarding fundamental rights in its border management. To address this critique, the EU legislators established, inter alia, a Consultative Forum on fundamental rights to provide independent advice. Despite the importance of this issue, little effort has been made to study the role and impact of the Consultative Forum. The second part of the lecture discusses the role of Frontex's Consultative Forum and whether it has improved Frontex's fundamental rights accountability. We argue that the status of the Forum and its possibility to engage with internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis provide an opportunity to trigger dialogues with and between Frontex's accountability fora. While the impact of these accountability dialogues has been modest so far, we also acknowledge the normative potential of them to enhance the accountability of Frontex.