



**Migration &
misinformation
on the Greek-Turkish
borders**

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EVROS REGION

Greece's - Europe's external borders



2 distinct incidents

Similar - not identical

Same aim & purpose

Spread of **fake news** & their impact on **human lives**

Global Mobility



More than 65 million people have been **displaced**

More than 250 million people are **migrating**

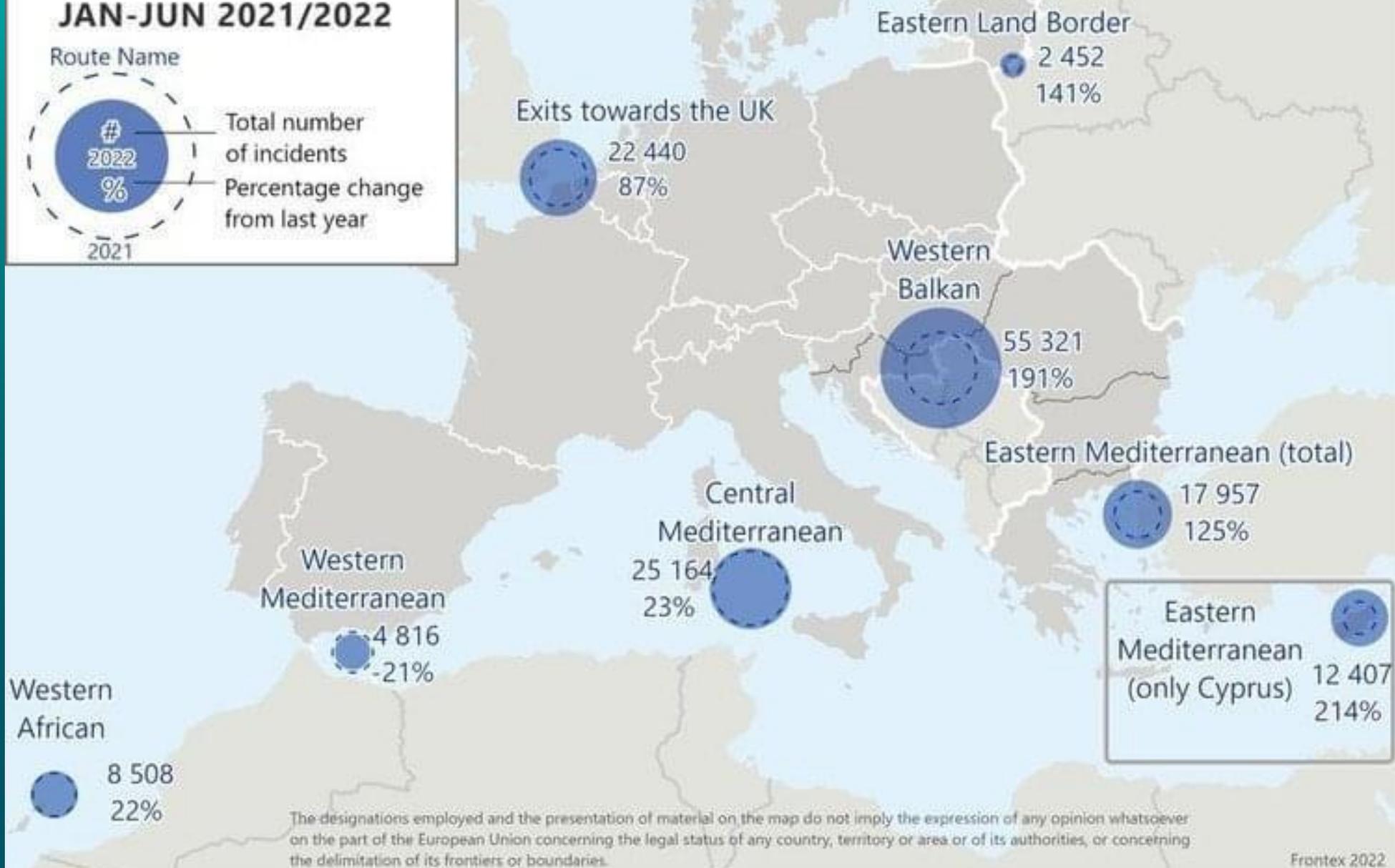
The world is constantly **changing**, becoming more and more **globalized** and **interconnected**

Societies are being **fractured**, becoming more and more **closed**, **inhospitable**, and reluctant to diversity.

NUMBER OF ILLEGAL BORDER-CROSSINGS JAN-JUN 2021/2022

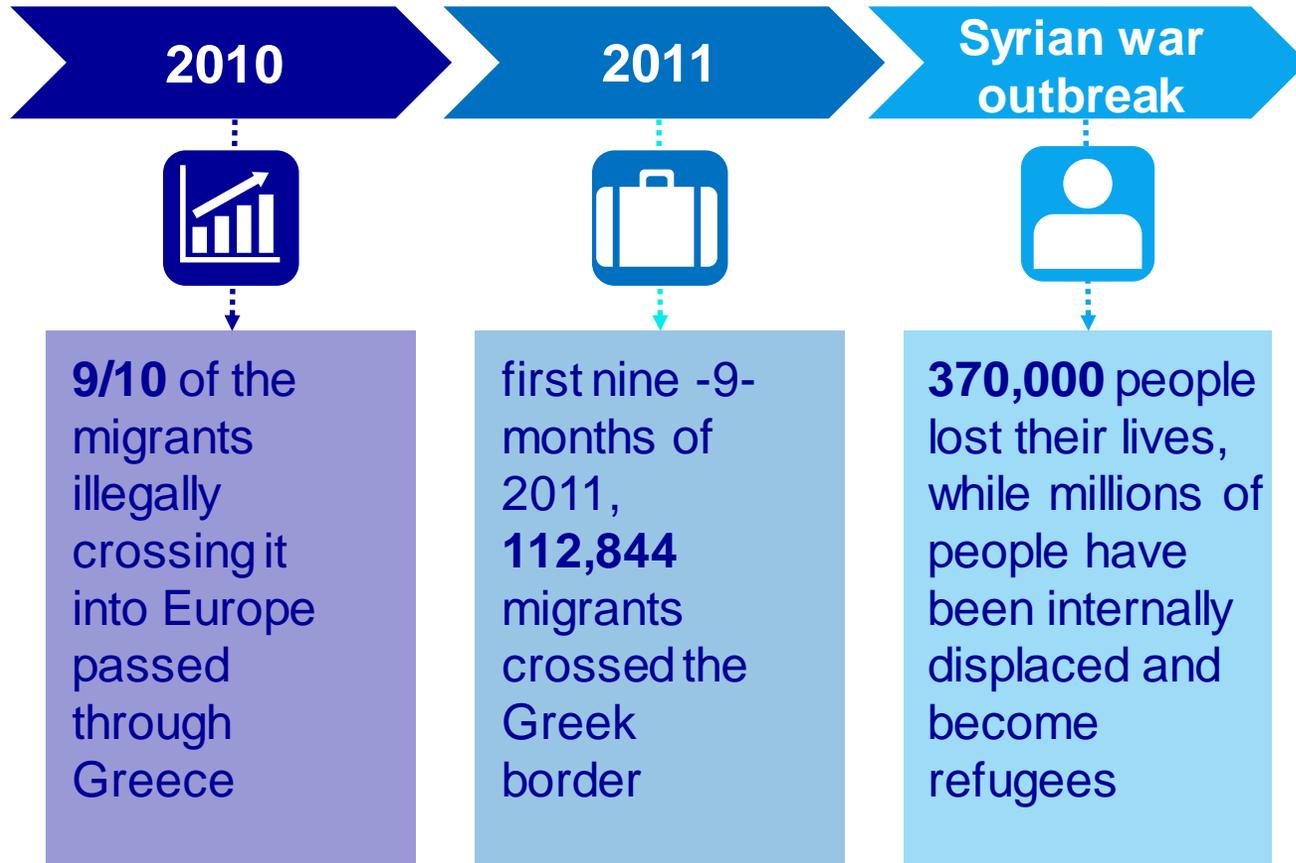
FRONTEx

Route Name



The designations employed and the presentation of material on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the European Union concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Greece - main entry point to Europe



4 million Syrian nationals abandoned the country to flee violence, finding refuge in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey





Turkey's Stance & Role

War in Syria

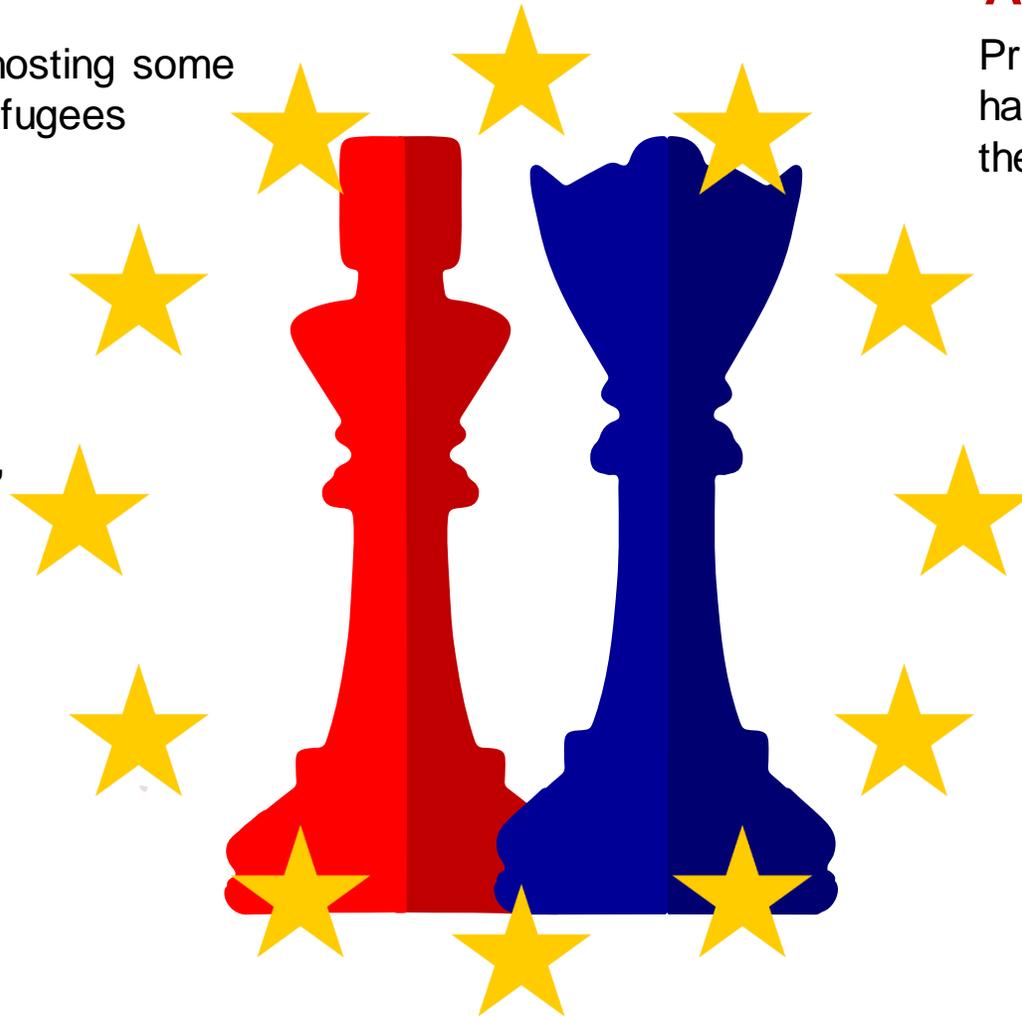
Turkey found itself hosting some 3.5 million Syrian refugees

No visa policy

No visa is required for economic migrants from countries: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, Algeria, and Morocco, etc

Low-cost flight tickets

Turkish airline companies' tickets are low cost - hence anyone from African or Asian country can travel to Istanbul for only 50€



Ailing economy

Pressure exerts on the EU, which has no integrated policy based on the EU principles (solidarity)

Xenophobic EU

EU is fully aware of the economic benefits deriving from collaborating with Turkey (low-cost labor force, arms procurement programs, etc.), so it has adapted accordingly

Instrumentalize migration

Volume of flows increased gradually due to a consistent well-organized strategy

Caravan of Hope



January 2019

Security Service noticed Activity on social media



Open borders

Spread by word of mouth - Greece would open its borders on **the 5th of April 2019**, at exactly **12.00** noon



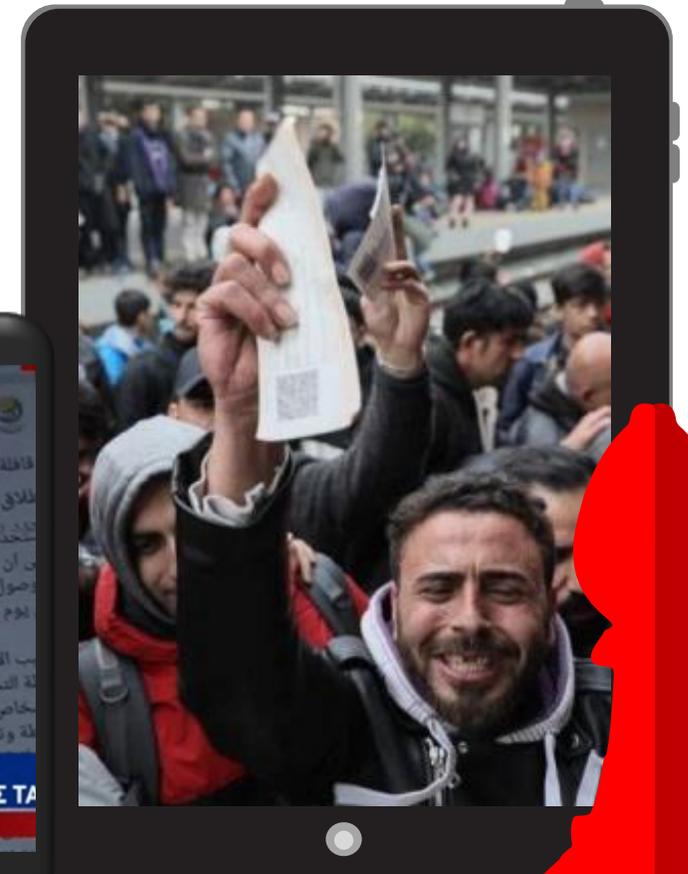
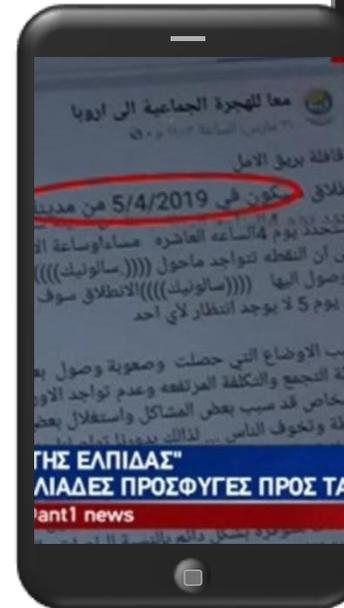
Caravan of Hope

Migrants and refugees urged to travel to the Greek-Turkish border



Fake news

At the same time and in two different countries (Greece/Turkey), the same initiative





Caravan of Hope



*“We won’t wait for anybody... as some of you may not have the necessary documents, you should know that they may try to stop you... we are in contact with humanitarian organizations, which suggested that **we should gather in Thessaloniki and will help us...** we shall inform you of the gathering spot 24 hours before we set off...”*



*“The caravan will include many families and young people and should be long enough to **attract the attention of the mass media.** We want your support, and we will give you all necessary details about what is going to happen from here”.*



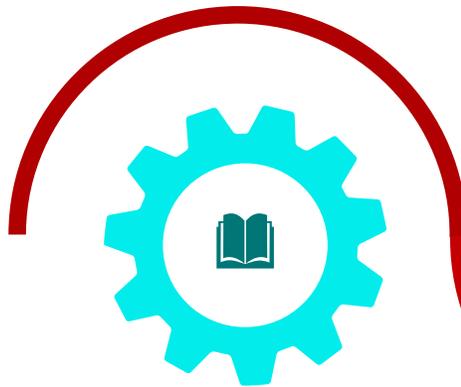
Caravan of Hope

The real number of refugees was **much higher**

It is estimated to be **30,000** in Greece and **95,000** in Turkey

Unprecedented mobilization

People staying in various parts of Greece set off to the village of Diavata, near Thessaloniki, by various means (bus, train, taxi, even on foot)



7,000 participants on the first day of posting

Both pages from social networks became very popular and were also posted in Kurdish and Farsi



Turkey and Greece raised their security levels

Investigation started to find those who took advantage of the mobilization by spreading rumors and requiring those wishing to join the caravan to pay a fee **250€ per person**



Hellenic Police checks

Majority of the refugees were convinced to return to the facilities and the flats where they were accommodated





E.K.A.M.

Caravan of Hope



Cooperation

Bilateral cooperation between Greece and Turkey was stepped up and strengthened, while at the same time all European tools for collecting and analyzing information - Europol - Frontex - INTERPOL



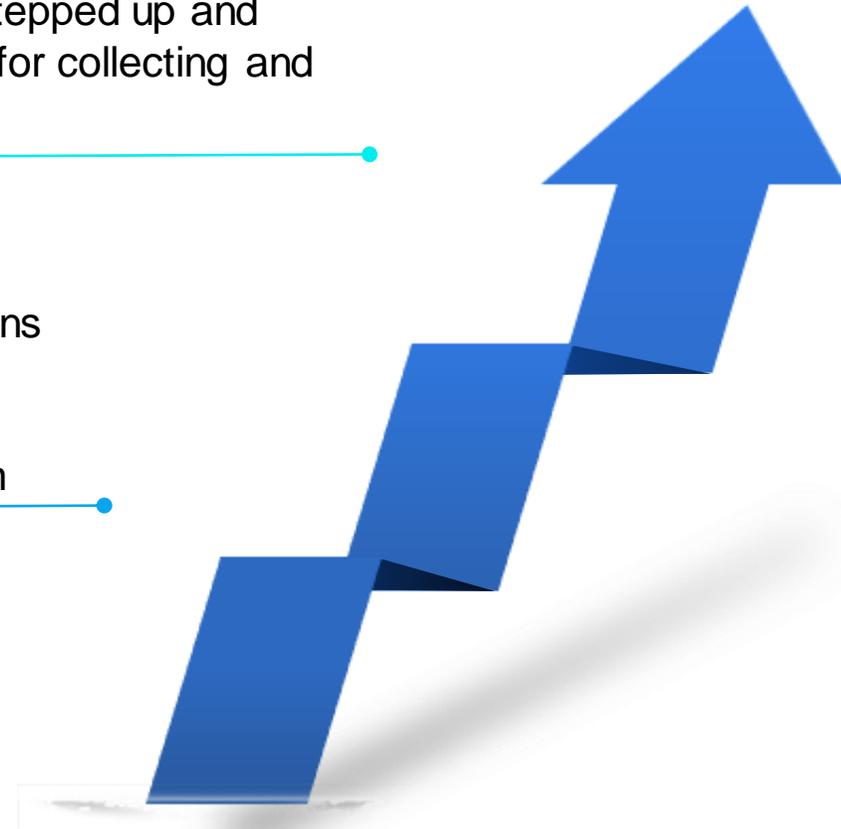
Reasons

- very slow procedure for the examination of asylum applications
- imminent expiration of a series of accommodation programs
- bad living conditions
- people's desire for a better future, especially for their children



Operation to convince those who arrived in Diavata to leave

- Ministry for Migration Policy,
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees,
- International Organisation for Migration



Greece

Turkey



Send the **Chief of the German Police to Greece** - showing its great interest in preventing the massive entry of migrants to Europe

Investigation conducted by the police services of the two countries focused on whether the creators of the pages that triggered the “caravan” **were located in Greece or Turkey** or whether they were linked to specific organizations based in certain developed countries.

“The borders are not opening”

“The refugees who have camped outside the refugee structure in Diavata, as well as in Larissa Station, will be gradually convinced to return to accommodation structures”

“The refugees are not going to be allowed to leave Diavata or to travel to Northern Greece from Larissa Station”

Xenophobic Europe

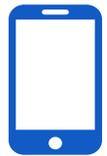
Police investigation

Political announcements & declarations

EVROS REGION - 2020

Mayor of Talas on twitter

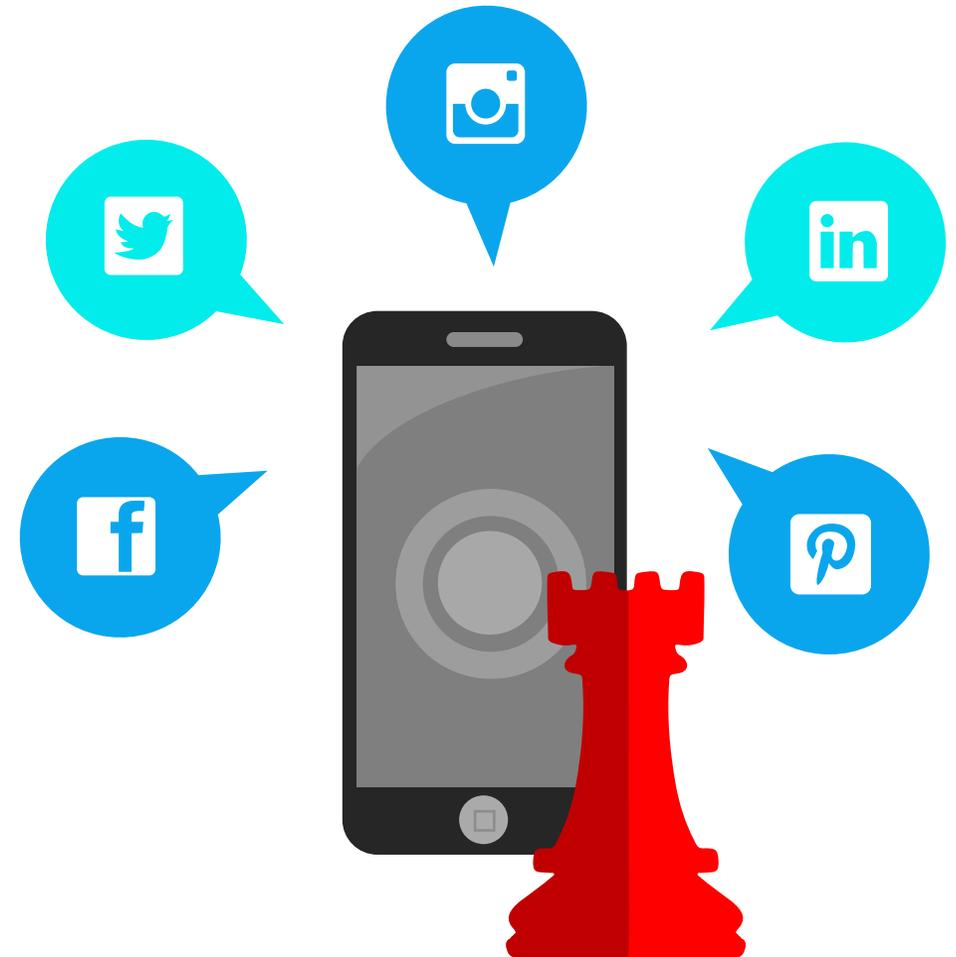
“When the borders open, the municipal authority will provide free transport for irregular migrants who wish to travel to countries of the European Union”



- daily departure hours - 11.00 and 21.00
- A telephone number to apply



Social media platforms
Arabic-speaking groups





EVROS REGION – 2020

Disinformation about the refugees

Fake news

Inability to process or cross-check information blurred the lines between **truth and lie**, reality and propaganda

Turkish propaganda

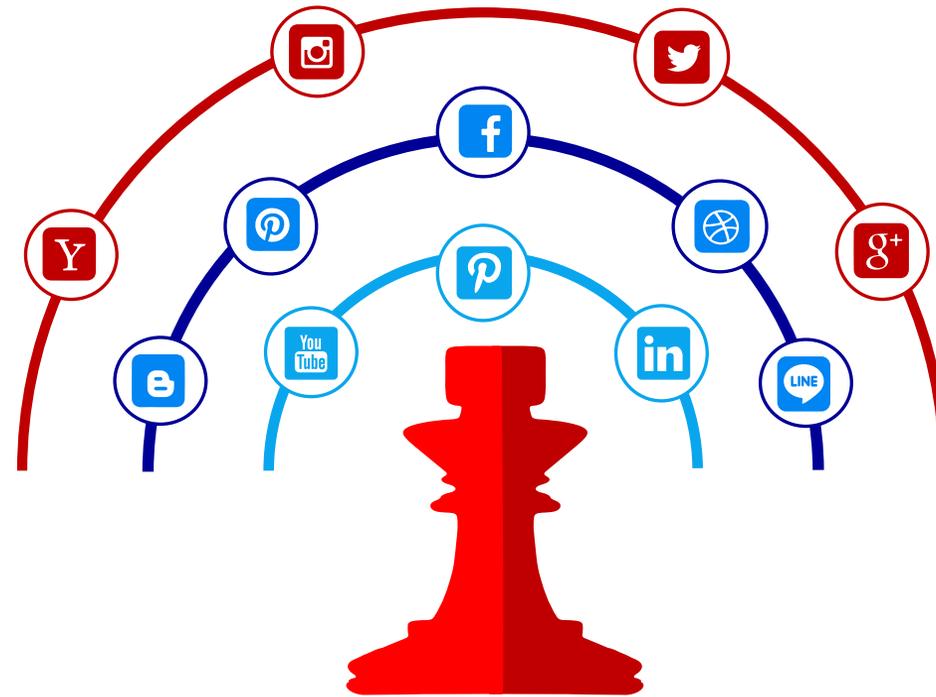
Confrontation between Greece & Turkey

Media attention

Incidents were exploited for political gain

Border to EU open

Thousands of migrants set off to the Greek-Turkish borders - many of them attempted to cross into Greece, thus causing a commotion.



TK President: "We will open the gates"



Propaganda war



Propaganda war

Hellenic Police reaction

Hellenic Police allowed no one to pass using tear gas and water cannons - Greek journalists reported that the **Turkish side**, too, used tear gas

Media

Tragic images of children and women who were trying to escape the smoke were on all the media.



A war of propaganda between Turkey and Greece had just begun



Turkish Minister of Interior on Tweeter

“Yet another death today at 11 am. Violations of human rights go on”

“135,844 migrants made it to the Greek-Turkish borders”
(actual number 2,000 - Istanbul Bar Association)





Propaganda war

Social media and the press

- Made the events seem more dramatic than they really were
- By referring over and over again to “**intruders**”, they gave the impression that the country was going through a war-like situation.



Those able to reach the borders, however, dream of a future in Germany, Austria, or the Nordic countries.

Conspiracy theories

- “hordes of people”
- “criminals” who killed and raped
- “plot organized by Erdogan to destabilize Greece”
- “plot to Islamise Greece”



Greece

“an asymmetric war takes place on the borders”



28,000 migrants were supposedly prevented from crossing the border

only 220 migrants managed to enter the country

Greek and Turkish governments have a common point: “they use migrants/refugees for **political gain**”, as a “**leverage**” to exert pressure on the West or as a means to **boost patriotism**.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Instrumentalization of Migration and the Role of Fake News



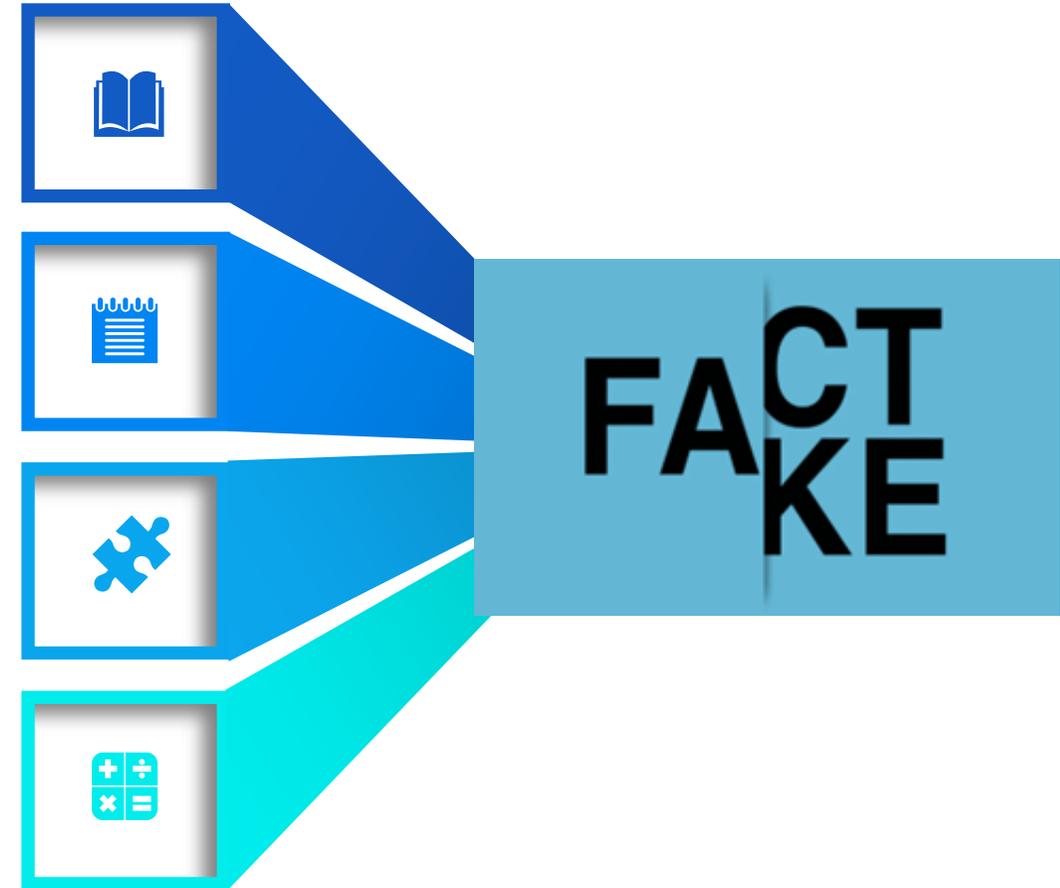
The Instrumentalization of Migration and the Role of Fake News

Both incidents aimed at using **Greece as a transit country for refugees, asylum applicants, and illegal migrants** who wished to go to Europe

During the **2019** events, we managed to deal with the “Caravan of Hope” in cooperation with Turkey and the EU

Evros River events in 2020 - no cooperation with Turkey, but encouraging and facilitating the movement to the external borders from within its territory

Asylum applicants, refugees, and migrants have **no trust in the State and the State Mechanism.**



Fortress Europe



“Citizens should draw information from organizations that have nothing to gain from the information they provide while penal laws should be updated to reflect the latest technological developments and provide for more severe penalties.”



Lack of a holistic approach



Lack of a comprehensive strategy



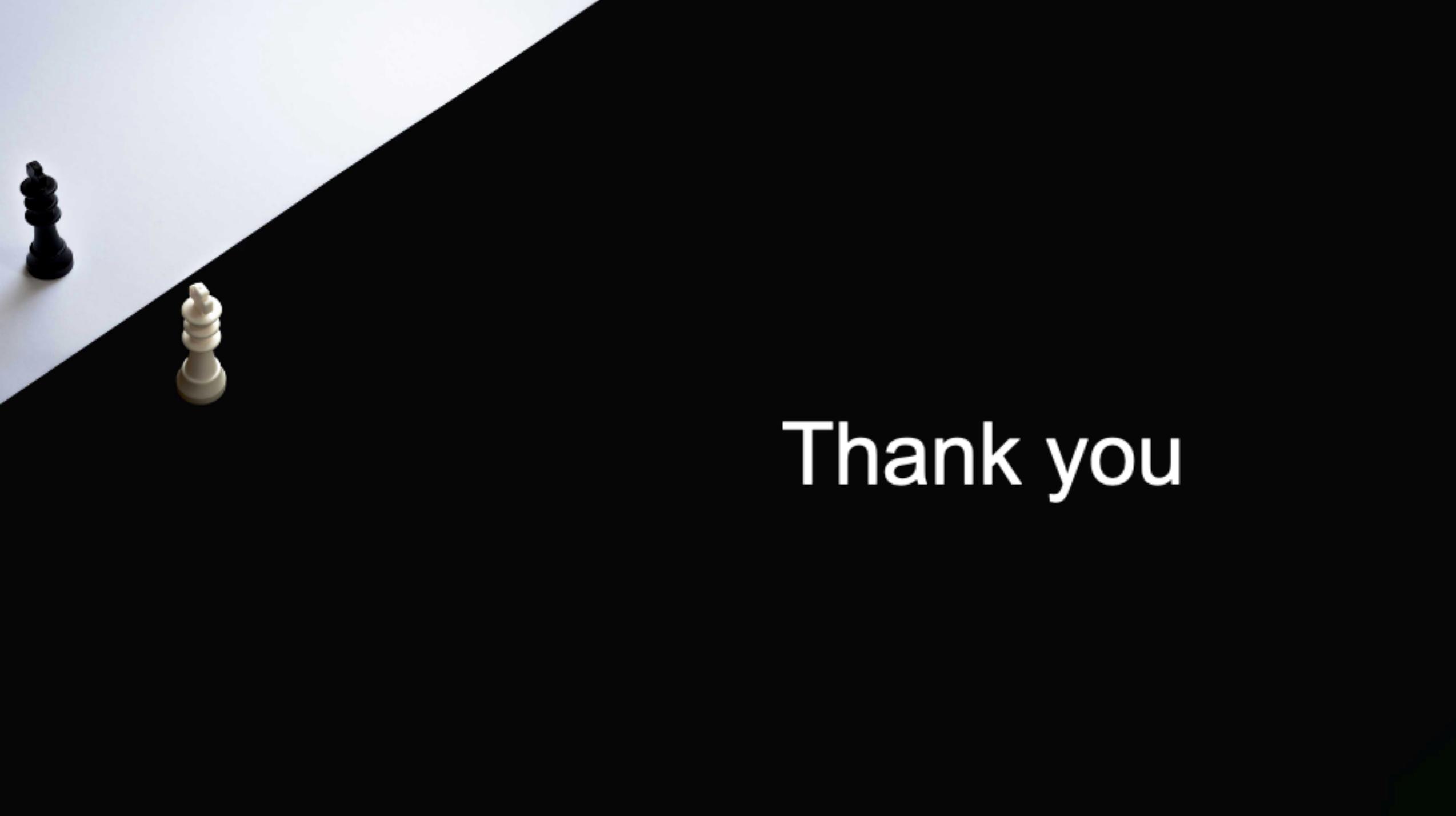
Spreading fake news - dangerous organized strategy



A strategy that undermines the very essence of democracy



Establishing a climate of mistrust of institutions and procedures



Thank you