

# 04

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## TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS



# The externalisation of asylum and the reception of people seeking international protection

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## How to quote this case.

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## Introduction

### Scenario.

Social inclusion and social innovation policies

### Mission.

Externalisation of borders for people seeking international protection

### Suggested time.

Students' playing: 20 minutes

Debriefing: 20 minutes

### Learning objectives.

The main aim of this mission is to discuss the meaning of innovation and what innovation in social policy entails. Drawing upon Moulart et al. (2014), social innovation refers to innovation in social relations through initiatives and policy processes that aim to address structural problems of social exclusion and inequality. Social innovation encompasses processes and actors at different governance levels (macro, meso, and micro levels), and involves the empowerment of social movements and the promotion of bottom-up governance initiatives.

The mission addresses this goal by considering the international protection and asylum system, which was put in place to offer protection to people fleeing violence and conflicts. The case follows a Prime Minister of an EU country that has become polarised over immigration policies. She claims that she is "innovating" by promoting changes regarding the current system for people seeking international protection. She wants to tackle the influx of refugees through a large-scale, transnational system of migration control.

To promote these changes, the two strategies being considered by the Prime Minister are presented. The first strategy entails making changes at the national level by passing a law in Parliament to externalise asylum processing and refugee obligations to (non-

EU) partner countries. The second strategy consists in building up a transnational coalition of EU countries in order to foster a transboundary migration policy that will lead to the further externalisation of borders. While the first strategy succeeds (in part due to the Prime Minister's capacity to attract support on an issue that concerned a large share of the country's citizenship), the second does not. Nevertheless, regarding this second strategy, one may argue that the coalition's proposal has now permeated future EU policymaking.

The game is modelled on the case of Denmark, which (along with other EU countries such as the UK, that was in the EU at the time, and the Netherlands) moved towards the externalisation of European national borders for people seeking international protection. While issues concerning the proposal (and its subsequent approval in the Danish Parliament) mainly came to the fore in 2021, the coalition to influence the EU level had already been initiated in around 2002–2003 (the leadership of Tony Blair, the former UK's Prime Minister, had played a major role at the time). Among the main countries behind this coalition, one can find Denmark, the UK and the Netherlands. In the debriefing, references to this actual case may help contextualise the debate and provide further elements for discussion. In the references there is more information about the case.

### Common questions.

**QUESTION:** Why does a social-democratic Prime Minister want to promote a new law at national level that treats disadvantaged groups even more harshly?

**ANSWER:** The Prime Minister states that she wants to fix a "broken system". However, some analysts point to the idea that the proposal to relocate asylum seekers outside Europe is an extreme strategy taken up by Country Z's social-democrats to outshine the political right and attract Country Z's voters. Hence, even though Country Z was among the first countries to sign and ratify the 1951 Geneva Convention, in the 1980s a shift in political narratives and public debates occurred when anti-immigrant populist parties gained influence. This influence led to an internal split in the social-democrat party over immigration, ultimately leading to harsher measures being taken against immigrants. The 2015 refugee crisis and rise in asylum-seekers in Country Z put further pressure on mainstream parties to support anti-immigration policies.

## Issues for debate.

This case should spark discussion on what policy innovation means in the field of social policy. In the theory framework of the P-CUBE project, a non-incremental innovation is any significant departure from the status quo, even if it goes backwards in normative terms, even regarding the protection of rights. In this respect, the law passed in Parliament (Strategy 1) might be seen as an innovation. Regarding the strategies proposed, other analysts would say that the approach taken by Country Z's Prime Minister is far from innovative, but instead "represents a decades-long dream recycled by political and civil-servant networks from some Northern European countries. But while a small group of countries have pursued the idea, thus far, many more European countries have rejected it as lacking realism and pragmatism". In this regard, Australia's Pacific Solution is often mentioned as the first contemporary expression of externalisation for migration and refuge purposes. This was carried out by opening detention centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, mostly in the 2001-2008 period.

At the same time, bearing in mind the definition of social innovation stated above, to be socially

innovative, the policy's goal should be to protect the social rights of vulnerable people. In this regard, then, Country Z's proposal is contested.

There is also a dimension of the analysis that is related to the governance challenges and prior assumptions entailed in Strategy 1 (the new law). For instance, it is still unclear how the country plans to implement the law or which third country would be involved. Consequently, it is difficult to assess the legality of something that is still so imprecise. Under the new law, asylum seekers could be flown to third countries regardless of their origin. There is still uncertainty regarding whether and how the law would be deployed. The media has speculated that Rwanda could be the country where Country Z would send people seeking protection (at the time of writing this case, the UK had already started sending asylum-seekers to Rwanda). Here, another idea that might be derived from the case is that there is a difference between deciding and implementing. In addition, it is clear that a political success can even be obtained with a policy that is largely symbolic at the moment of passing the law.

## References

Moulaert, Frank; MacCallum, Diana; Mehmood, Abid; Hamdouch, Abdelillah; Moulaert, Frank (Editor); MacCallum, Diana (Editor); Mehmood, Abid (Editor); Hamdouch, Abdelillah (Editor); (2014); "General introduction: the return of social innovation as a scientific concept and a social practice", in *The international handbook on social innovation: Collective action, social learning and transdisciplinary research*, Edward Elgar; Cheltenham, UK; pp. 1 - 6

Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin; Chemlali, Ahlam; Whyte, Zachary; Feith Tan, Nikolas (2021); Danish desires to export asylum responsibility to camps outside Europe. Europe AMIS Seminar. Seminar report; University of Copenhagen. The Saxo Institute Centre for Advanced Migration Studies

Pace, Michelle; (2021) "Denmark's immigrants forced out by government policies. Relocating asylum seekers outside Europe is just the latest extreme measure from Denmark's Social Democrats to outflank the political right"; Chatham House

Broadcasters such as the BBC are publishing up-to-date news that is related to this case (not only regarding Denmark, but also the UK).



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## Case studies available

- El cas Pirelli-Mar. (Ref. CL-2022-01)
- Instituto Mental de Santa Cruz. (Ref. PA-2022-01)
- School meals for vulnerable children. (Ref. PCUBE-2022-01)
- Artificial Intelligence and automated decision making in welfare policies. (Ref. PCUBE-2022-02)

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