Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Interior

PhD Program Smart Migration and Asylum Governance (SMAG)

Key facts

Duration: 1st of September 2020 – 31th of August 2023 (PhD projects altogether),
of which financed by AMIF: 1.9.2020-3.9.2022

Application: Apply under https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/universitaet/organisation/jobs.html

Donor: EU (AMIF), Ministry of the Interior (AT)

Involved: Departments: Department for Migration and Globalization & Department for E-Governance and Administration

The program is embedded in the Danube University's PhD program in Migration Studies.
More information on the contents of the program and the curriculum can be found here.

The overall aim of the "Smart Migration Asylum Governance" research program is to contribute to a better understanding of the governance of asylum and migration. This requires both a better understanding of the effects of migration and asylum policies on mobilities and mobility choices as well as a better understanding of the dynamics of international cooperation, how different sets of policies adopted by some countries influence policymaking elsewhere, how policies adopted at in different contexts interact with each other.

The PhD program constitutes of three distinct, yet interlinked subprojects, each pursued by an individual PhD researcher.

Sub-project 1: Understanding responsibility sharing and dynamics of international cooperation in the context of forced displacement

Strengthening the international response to the challenge of forced displacement has been a major objective of the Global Compact on Refugees. Yet a central challenge in cooperation in the context of international protection and migration is that cooperation is asymmetric: different stakeholders have very different, at times incompatible interests; they also differ considerably in their capacities to influence the terms of the debate, the dynamics of cooperation and the nature of cooperation arrangements. Last, they have also very different capacities in implementing policies, again requiring international cooperation

The PhD project is expected to develop an original approach to the topic, addressing specific aspects of the problem laid out in the above and empirically examining responsibility sharing and dynamics of cooperation focusing on a selection of country cases or broader refugee crises and under due consideration of the relevant regional and international dimension. The PhD should address international protection from an international perspective. This may but need not involve an analysis of the EU and/or its Member States on the international level. Projects exclusively focusing on an internal EU dimension are discouraged.

Sub-project 2: Understanding migration policy effectiveness: effects of migration policy, unintended consequences and interactions with other policies.

Research on the effects and effectiveness of migration policy has considerable advanced in recent years, thanks, amongst others to the development of a variety of indices of migration policy and methods to assess some effects of migration policy measures, notably on the scale and composition of migration flows. At the same time, there are considerable gaps in knowledge, e.g. regarding the effects of changing "Search and Rescue" and control operations in the Mediterranean, the linkage of visa policies to cooperation on return and readmission, or the effects of broadening or narrowing access to legal admission channels (such as family reunification, resettlement or admission for work) on regular and irregular migration dynamics.

On the basis of specific country case studies or cross-country comparisons the PhD project is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the interaction effects of migration policy measures on the one hand, and migratory and broader mobility patterns on the other. A cooperation with sub-project 1 and 3 is strongly encouraged.

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Sub-project 3: Assessing extraterritorial interventions on the basis of agent-based modelling.

The focus of sub-project 3 is on migration policy interventions "upstream" that is measures in or by countries of origin and transit, how such measures impact on migration decisions and what these implies for the design of effective governance and cooperation.
Most existing studies of the effects of migration policies are based on cross-sectional and aggregate data. How individuals respond to migration policies and adjust their aspirations, strategies and actual behavior has so far been – if at all – largely been explored by qualitative studies. These offer important insights, but do not, or only to a limited extent allow generalizations and more definitive conclusions regarding the interaction of policies and migratory behavior.

The PhD project will use agent-based modelling as an innovative approach to assess these interactions. A major focus of this project will be on developing specific models that will be tested focusing on specific policies suggested by the PhD researcher. For empirical cases, the PhD researcher will closely work with subprojects 1 and 2.