

**Targeting the Pull Factor: Does Pro-Refugee Policy Increase Inflows or  
Redistribute Asylum Seekers? Evidence from Germany's 2015 Policy Shift**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the impact of Germany's August 2015 suspension of the Dublin III Regulation for Syrian refugees on the influx of asylum seekers. Utilizing Spatial Synthetic Difference-in-Differences (S-SDID), we disentangle the direct "pull effect" from spatial spillover effects across 27 European countries. Our baseline SDID estimates show a significant increase in Syrian asylum applications in Germany (ATT: +16,833 per month). However, when Germany and Hungary are treated as a combined unit, the ATT drops sharply to -2,809, suggesting that a substantial portion of the increase reflects a shift from transit countries rather than new arrivals from Syria. Furthermore, we find a negative Average Indirect Treatment Effect (AITE) of -1,070 per country in neighboring states (Belgium, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, and Netherlands), indicating a "vacuum effect" where refugees were diverted to Germany from its immediate neighbors. These findings suggest that while pro-refugee signals significantly alter the distribution of asylum seekers within Europe, the net increase in the total refugee burden may be smaller than the country-level data suggests.

**Key Words:** Asylum Seekers; Refugee Crisis; Europe.

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