

CALL FOR PAPERS

The rise of international asylum coordination: Understanding the evolution and impact of safe third country policies

A workshop and publication project

The asylum regimes of many liberal democracies are characterized by a tension between the pursuit of discretion over immigration and the normative as well as legal obligations of refugee protection. In response to this tension, these states increasingly turn to international asylum coordination. Initially developed as “first country of asylum” policies in Europe and later evolved into “safe third country” agreements, various forms of asylum coordination have sought justification in the soft law conclusions of the UNHCR Executive Committee. Asylum coordination is used to justify denying protection to asylum seekers on the grounds that they can receive protection in another country. Early cases of policy development include the European Union’s Dublin Regulation, which came into force in 1997, and the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement which was implemented in 2004 and renegotiated in 2023. However, more recent state practice has seen a proliferation of bilateral agreements created to manage asylum claims and exert control over spontaneous arrivals. These include the EU-Turkey Agreement, the Australian “Pacific Solution,” the UK-France returns treaty, and various bilateral agreements signed by the US and Central American states.

With the support of the Sallows Chair of Human Rights and the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, we will be hosting a 2-day workshop in October 2026. Limited funding is available to support the travel of selected participants.

The purpose of this workshop is to invite a select number of researchers and policy experts to inquire into the historical and conceptual basis of the safe third country concept, examine case studies of international asylum coordination, and evaluate the effects and implications of the spread of these policies. The papers produced for the seminar will contribute to an edited academic volume the organizers plan to submit to *McGill-Queen’s University Press* as part of the Refugee and Forced Migration Studies series.

For the workshop, short papers (5000-7000 words) are invited that will respond to the following questions:

- How have law, politics, and state practice shaped the evolution of the safe third country concept?
- What have been the legal, social, and political consequences of international asylum coordination?
- What explains relevant policy variation between countries? Why have some international agreements been more durable than others?
- What role has the UNHCR played in the rise of international asylum coordination?
- How does international asylum coordination reinforce or challenge the global refugee regime?

We are interested in case studies as well as historical, contextual and evaluative papers from a range of disciplines and regional perspectives. We welcome co-authored contributions that bring a cross-disciplinary perspective to the project.

To apply, we ask that you please send a maximum 300 word abstract, a 200 word bio, and a list of recent publications to asylumcoordinationproject2026@gmail.com, by 15 March 2026. We will notify participants by 15 April 2026 if their proposal has been accepted. The deadline for draft papers (5000-7000 words) is 15 August 2026 to ensure participants can read drafts in advance of the conference.

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