

On 21st January 2019, Ciné-ONU screened 'Styx' in partnership with the LUX Film Prize to highlight the issue of search and rescue at sea at Cinéma Galeries in Brussels.



'Styx' is a dramatization about a doctor from Europe who sets out to sea alone in her sailing boat. Her goal: Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean. But her dream holiday is quickly broken off on the high seas, when, after a storm, she finds herself near a stricken fishing boat with migrants on board. Around a hundred people are about to drown. Rike follows maritime law and radios for help. As her request is going nowhere, she is forced to make a momentous decision – what does she do?

The discussion after the screening focused on migration across the Mediterranean and the lack of help for those wanting to flee their home countries for various economic, political and social issues. According to the UNHCR, in 2018 alone, 2,262 people lost their lives trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, and actions by states are encouraging some NGO's to cease search and rescue efforts (UNHCR, 2019).

The panel consisted of Jean Lambert, London's Green MEP; Inma Vazquez, MSF Representative to the EU and NATO; and Federico Soda, Director of the International Organisation for Migration's Coordination Office for the Mediterranean and was moderated by Petra Hongell, UNRIC.



Jean Lambert said about the film that she thought she'd end up in floods of tears, but remarked that: "I'm sad, but god I'm more furious I think". Federico Soda agreed with this sentiment, observing that when one looks at the issues around migration every day, one has to detach. Yet this film was like a punch in the stomach, a reminder that "We're playing politics with the lives of these people."

Inma Vazquez pointed out that there was only one search and rescue boat left, sponsored by both MSF and SOS Méditerranée, yet now even this has stopped as a result of actions by the Italian Government and other European States. For Ms Vazquez, proactive search and rescue was a priority. As she said: "At this moment people are dying and we need to try and prevent that."



Legal and political issues around migration were also highlighted by both Federico Soda and Jean Lambert. On the issue of settlement Ms Lambert highlighted that the Dublin agreement was contributing to the reluctance of countries like Italy and Greece to accept more migrants. She argued for a new system that would recognise the links that migrants have to countries, familial for example, and give migrants a level of choice.

Finally, Federico Soda highlighted the need to see migration holistically and systematically. 'Styx' shows one area where migrants are being failed, but the legal side and the root causes of migration cannot be ignored.

To see pictures from the evening, [click here](#) .

For more information about the film, [click here](#) .

To download the handout, [click here](#).

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