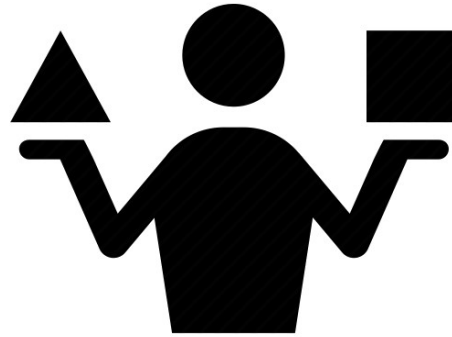# WORKSHEET: COMPARABILITY

Introduction

In light of Europe's refugee crisis – mainly referring to rising numbers of people arriving to the European Union in 2015 – many individuals and media bodies looked for comparisons to the past, sometimes pointing out „striking parallels between past and present". One of the historical events that was and still is repeatedly mentioned is the Kindertransport. Most of the parallels drawn from this historical event concern the attitudes of government, media and hosting society.

Instruction

Please read the following short text by Dr. Jessica Reinisch from Birkbeck College, University of London, and try to apply it to the case study of the Kindertransport. What might be the challenges and opportunities of such a comparison? What is similar? What is different?

Present your discussion in one of the following ways: a short newspaper article; a talk show interview, a speech to the international community on the topic of refugees.

„Invoking history and finding precedents is no neutral exercise. Every political project can find confirmation from history by selectively or mis-reading the evidence and isolating it from its context. This doesn't make it representative or useful. Drawing a straight line between two superficially similar events is at best misleading, at worst disingenuous and plain wrong. All of this doesn't mean that historical examples are of no use, but it does mean that lessons from the past have to be extracted more carefully. We should ask: what is distinctive about each refugee crisis, and what is not? What patterns and details have we seen in the past that still seem to apply today? What sorts of attempted solutions have never worked; which ones have had some success and might be used again?"

Taken from the article „History matters… but which one? Every refugee crisis has a context", written in September 2015 by Dr. Jessica Reinisch, a senior lecturer in Modern European History at Birkbeck College, University of London.