More than one million refugees are expected this year to knock at Europe’s door. For a long time Europe took the position that as most of the refugees came for economic and not for political reasons they have to be deterred. Persons who tried to rescue shipwrecked people were prosecuted for human trafficking. A catastrophe in April 2015 in which more than 800 people died led to pressure on Europe to engage in the rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea.

This lecture will explain the factual background of immigration across to Europe, the European approach to this problem and analyse its interplay between refugee law and law of the sea. European practice provides an interesting point of comparison given the ongoing controversy in Australia concerning these issues.

Matthias Hartwig is a Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg, Germany and will be a visiting Research Fellow at University of Tasmania Faculty of Law, mid-September to end of October 2015.