

Protecting refugees - securing the EU's external borders - stepping up action against irregular migration

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The flow of refugees and economic migrants arriving in the EU, mostly from Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia and the Horn of Africa, has reached an unprecedented scale, challenging our capacity to cope. According to the UNHCR, more than 50 million people are fleeing war and conflicts worldwide and many more are looking for a better future. Europe cannot solve these problems alone but only together with all our partners worldwide.

Only concerted and comprehensive European action, comprising measures aimed at countries of origin, transit and destination, can move us forward. This must include greater coherence in the EU's internal and external policies and, in particular, its common foreign and security policy, development policy and migration policy.

We need a common European approach. Therefore, the EPP calls on the full implementation of the existing minimum standards of the Asylum Acquis. Furthermore the EU must step up the EU's external border control, to prevent illegal crossing. There is also a need to protect our citizens from migration flows being infiltrated by jihadist terrorists. The EPP insists that those who don't qualify for international protection be returned swiftly. We deplore the current lack of effective enforcement of return decisions. We should ensure that the right to seek asylum is respected for those in need of protection, while swift and effective return and readmission measures for those who do not qualify for protection are put in place.

We have to jointly:

- Tackle the root causes of massive migration flows. Sustainable solutions have to be found to conflicts in our neighbourhood, especially the Syria conflict. Especially Islamist terrorism such as IS/Da'esh, which is terrorising large parts of the Middle East and Africa, has to be fought with determination. The EU should strengthen diplomatic efforts, together with international partners, to convince other countries in the region of the need for a common strategy towards this global challenge. A geopolitical solution has to be found for the war in Syria and the crisis in Libya.
- Significantly increase funding to the UNHCR, the World Food Programme and to those countries in the region that receive large numbers of refugees. Especially for education programs.
- Offer safety and humanitarian assistance as close as possible to the places of origin by creating safe zones and reception and accommodation centres in third countries where the asylum procedures can already be initiated. We need to move towards a system in which asylum requests can be processed in the regions of origin and at the EU's external borders. This will create a legal way for persons in need to enter Europe and mitigate their risk of falling into the hands of criminal human traffickers. European financial aid should also be increased to support local efforts.
- Encourage the European Commission and Member States to quickly implement "hotspot" facilities / processing centres in frontline Member States and in the Western Balkans countries, where migrants will be swiftly identified and registered upon arrival and where asylum requests can already be processed. The EU and Member States should support this common effort with staff, financial and technical assistance.
- Reform the European Asylum System, in view of common and faster asylum procedures, to foster a clear and common return policy and to improve reception conditions for asylum seekers with the support of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Frontex and other relevant EU agencies.
- Allow for the status of "temporary protection", which can be granted to refugees from war zones, until the situation in their countries is safe again and they are able to return to their countries of origin.
- Reinforce the external borders of the EU by stepping up border controls both at sea and on land in the Southern Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea and along the so-called "Balkan route". The uncontrolled influx of migrants into the EU needs to be stopped. We call on EU Member States to take their obligation to protect the EU's external borders seriously. The EU needs to support Member States in this effort by providing financial help, but also staff and equipment. We remain committed to open borders within the Schengen area, and therefore the EU's external borders must be secured in a more effective way.

- The fight against human traffickers and their organised criminal networks needs the utmost attention; rapid action as well as a long-term, comprehensive and concrete action plans must be set up in close cooperation with third countries, by targeting priority countries and routes.
- Further enhance police cooperation and support for local authorities along the smuggling routes in the Western Balkans.
- Implement an effective, fair and sustainable mechanism within the EU for burden sharing and distribution with regard to asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe.
- Reinforce our cooperation with countries of origin and transit regarding irregular migrants, human trafficking and return procedures, including through EU development aid which should be linked to the cooperation of countries. Welcome to that end the Commission proposal for a Trust Fund for Syria and Africa and ask the Member States to step up their contributions, which will help in dealing with the root causes.
- Develop a new approach towards Africa, comprising better opportunities for trade and development.
- Establish a common European list of safe countries of origin and transit, which will relieve asylum systems and facilitate effective return. This is an important prerequisite in order to focus our asylum and reception capacities on those truly in need of protection.

Only a comprehensive, integrated policy approach will be successful. This must include a strengthening of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. We call for a global approach to join efforts to address the unprecedented flow of persons into Europe. The cooperation of the Arab League and the African Union is crucial in this respect.

Upholding our international commitments and values while securing our borders and at the same time creating the right conditions for Europe's economic prosperity and societal cohesion must be our common goal.

**If you have any question
you would like to ask
please contact us.**

Rue du Commerce 10
1000 Brussels
T +32-2-2854140
E connect@epp.eu