

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

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We need a common European approach to manage the flow of refugees and economic migrants arriving in the EU. We have an obligation to help those in need of protection, but we also have to swiftly return those who do not qualify for international protection. The flow of refugees and economic migrants arriving in the EU has reached an unprecedented scale, challenging our capacity to cope at the European, national and local levels.

According to the UNHCR, more than 50 million people are fleeing war and conflicts worldwide, and many more are looking for a better future. Furthermore, as of mid-September 2015, more than 500,000 have crossed the Mediterranean Sea. The estimated number of unknown cases is much higher due to the lack of registration on a large scale, due to fake passports and irregular border crossings. The first destination for many migrants, mainly those coming from Turkish territory (almost 390,000), is Greece, from where they continue towards the north of Europe. Europe cannot solve the refugee and migration crisis 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 policies in the areas of foreign affairs, security, trade, development, humanitarian aid and migration.

Therefore, the EPP calls for:

- The **swift adoption and implementation** of the first and second package of the **European Agenda on Migration** (May and September 2015) with the aim of speeding up asylum procedures, fostering a functioning return mechanism and improving reception conditions for asylum seekers with the support of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Frontex and other EU agencies;
- **A clear timeline and roadmap** for short- and long-term solutions by the European Commission, Member States and the EP is needed until the measures are in place;

External borders - guarded and protected

- The EU to reinforce its external borders by **stepping up border controls both at sea and on land** in the Southern Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea and along the “Balkan route” to prevent illegal crossings; the Western Mediterranean model between Spain and Morocco should be used as a positive example;
- EU Member States to take **serious immediate measures to protect the EU’s external borders; proper security checks** for people entering the EU must be put in place; the EU needs to support Member States through **financial help, but also staff and equipment for the relevant EU agencies**; the European Commission to start and **consequently pursue infringement procedures against those Member States which do not comply with their obligation** to protect the EU’s external borders; non-action will ultimately jeopardise the Schengen Acquis;
- The European Commission and Member States to make immediate and **full use of the Schengen evaluation mechanism**;
- **The current governments of Greece and Italy to fulfil their obligations to secure their borders**, particularly considering that Greece received 430.1 M € from the former European Asylum Fund, European Return Fund and External Borders Fund from 2007 to 2013, plus the extraordinary allocation obtained under the Greek Action Plan from 2010 to 2014, while Italy received 388.98 M €; if a Member State is under high pressure due to the massive influx of people and cannot tackle these problems alone, the Member State should ask for the support of the EU and other Member States at an early stage;
- The European Commission, together with Member States, to efficiently step up the **cooperation with Turkey**, which is a NATO member and EU candidate country and which is in a position to play a key role in preventing and reducing irregular migration; to **implement the migration action plan recently agreed with Turkey**; to quickly strengthen the financial support for Turkey for the accommodation, alimentation and integration of refugees, and especially for the education of the children of migrants; a readmission agreement with Turkey has to be implemented;
- The European Commission to propose an **enlarged mandate for Frontex** with the purpose that Frontex leads the organisation and execution of operations supported with EU financial means in cooperation with Member States; Member States to grant additional financial resources for Frontex, EASO, and Europol in budgetary negotiations and in the MFF; furthermore, to establish a **European coastguard**;
- The European Commission and the European Parliament to speed up the development, implementation and adoption of instruments such as the **Smart Borders Package** with an EU-wide, modern IT-based entry/exit-system;
- All **Member States to make full use of and update the existing databases**; the security of EU citizens and the fight against terrorism is our highest priority;

Asylum Procedure: A European asylum system exists; Member States need to put it into practice

- The Member States to **fully implement** the existing minimum standards of the **Asylum Acquis**, which is a policy developed for the protection of those persecuted; the European Commission to revise the Asylum Acquis where shortcomings have been identified; and a **complete reform of the European Asylum System in the long term**; this should include an update of the existing Geneva Convention;
- The European Commission to propose a **new European asylum system under which asylum may be requested and examined at the EU’s external borders or preferably outside the EU**; to create information and facilitation centres in third countries with the competence and capability to treat requests outside the EU; **to develop safe zones with reception and accommodation centres and resettlement programmes in third states** and when possible in countries of origin; offer safety and humanitarian assistance as close as possible to the places of origin in third countries;
- The European Commission and Member States to quickly implement **“hotspot” facilities / processing centres** in neighbouring countries, where migrants will be swiftly identified and registered upon arrival and asylum requests can be processed; the EU **to assist the Western Balkan countries**, financially and in terms of the management, registration and accommodation of migrants; registrations should be made before their entry into Schengen; the EU and Member States should support this common effort with staff, financial and technical assistance;
- A clear **distinction** between **legitimate asylum seekers and irregular migrants** to be made; if possible refugees and economic migrants should be separated before their arrival in the EU; persons requesting asylum without the chance of a positive decision shall be returned swiftly;
- Member States to fulfil their obligation to **collect the fingerprints** of any new person arriving (Eurodac);
- The **time for asylum procedures to be significantly reduced** between the registration of a person and the decision on the asylum application;
- Allowing for the status of **“temporary protection”** by triggering EU-directive 55/2001, which will be granted to refugees from war zones, until the situation in their countries is safe and they can return; therefore, **contingency plan for refugees arriving in the EU** according to the Geneva Convention should be set and the **reception capacities of Europe should be respected**;

Return - Those who do not qualify for protection should be returned

- Those who **do not qualify for international protection to be returned swiftly**; deplores the current lack of **effective enforcement of return decisions**; the right to seek asylum must be respected for those in need of protection, while swift and effective return and readmission measures for those not qualifying must be put in place; also «hot spot facilities» should play a key role in return procedures;
- An **intra-EU relocation crisis mechanism** for refugees;
- Stringent return practices for dismissed applicants and irregular migrants in order to achieve fair and swift procedures;
- An EU programme for **joint returns under the coordination of Frontex** to be established;
- The **role and mandate of Frontex in return operations to be strengthened** and an integrated system of return management to be created; they should also channel and coordinate solidarity- based initiatives undertaken by civil society, local as well as regional institutions;
- The reinforcement of our **cooperation with countries of origin and transit regarding irregular migrants**, human trafficking and return procedures, including through EU development aid linked to the cooperation of those countries;

Human Traffickers - Stopping criminals from making money out of migrants’ vulnerability

- Stepping up the **fight against human traffickers and organised crime**; rapid action as well as long- term, comprehensive and concrete action plans must be set up in close cooperation with third countries, by targeting priority countries and routes;
- The **effective detection of and fight against identity and document fraud and trafficking**;
- Training programmes for security forces, intelligence forces, maritime and joint patrols in countries of origin and transit to be developed, especially for combatting human trafficking;

Member States should clearly define labour market needs for legal migrants

- **Legal migration**, based on the principle of subsidiarity, to be based on **labour market needs in Member States** and better possibilities for legal migration to be created;
- The full **implementation of existing EU legislation** in this area, such as the Single permit, seasonal workers and ICTs directives, the swift conclusion of the students and researchers directive, and the revision of the Blue Card directive;

Safe Third Countries

- Establishing a **common European list of safe countries of origin and transit**, which will relieve asylum systems and facilitate effective return?an important prerequisite in order to focus our asylum and reception capacities on those truly in need of protection;
- **EU Member States and candidate countries to be automatically considered as safe countries**;
- Agreements with third countries to be concluded; **external relations, development, trade policy and humanitarian aid must be interlinked** and coordinated with internal policies and internal security in order to be successful; we have to introduce a strict conditionality for countries of origin and transit regarding development aid, trade and visa agreements; also, both the UN and the US should play a major role;
- **Third countries near crisis regions**, such as the Arab Gulf States, to show **more willingness to accept and accommodate refugees**;
- Creating **information campaigns in countries of origin to stress the opportunities of legal entry** and highlight the risks of illegal migration and human trafficking; such information centres in third countries should be financed in cooperation with the government concerned and the UNHCR;

Tackling root causes of migration flows

- The **development of reception and protection capabilities** in countries of origin and transit, including in **North Africa and Turkey**; again, the Western Mediterranean model concerning migration and development between Spain and its African partners should be used as a best practice example;
- **Tackling the root causes of the massive migration flows; a geopolitical solution has to be formed**, especially against Islamist terror, which is destroying states;
- An **international strategy against Islamist terrorism** to be urgently developed and take effect;
- Finding **sustainable solutions to conflicts in our neighbourhood**; Europe must take on its responsibility and commit itself strongly to achieving a political solution to the crisis in Syria in order to enable these refugees to return as quickly as possible to their country; especially terrorist networks in Syria, Iraq and Libya have to be fought with determination; the EU should undertake a diplomatic offensive together with the US, Russia and other international partners to convince other countries in the region, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran, of a common strategy to fight Da'esh and to stop the proxy war in the region;
- **Increasing funding to the UNHCR, the World Food Programme** and to those countries in the region that receive large numbers of refugees; Member States must urgently step up their contributions;
- **A new approach for Africa**; the people of this continent need real prospects and we have to find a comprehensive, far-reaching approach for the EU's foreign security, development, and trade policies; the dangers of climate change must be part of this; it is also important to underline that democracy and human rights must be respected and are a precondition for development; the challenges of the moment should not stop us from engaging immediately in the medium- and long- term causes of these far-reaching migration flows;
- The dialogue with African countries to be strengthened and cooperation programmes to be put in place with them; of key importance will be the Valetta Conference taking place on 11 and 12 November 2015;

Integration - We have a responsibility to those who find home in Europe

- **Fighting against ideologies that inspire jihadist terrorism or lead to parallel societies** in which the core values of our constitutions are systematically undermined; the EU cannot and will not accept such a development; the rule of law and fundamental rights, such as freedom of speech, equal rights between women and men, and respect and dialogue between religious communities are essential elements of our value system; every migrant has the obligation to accept and respect European values;
- The **establishment of a European framework of integration** addressing the challenges of urban ghettos, providing language and integration courses, respect for our values and the role of the state and state authorities;
- **Give consideration to integration courses to be set up for asylum seekers** with good prospects of staying in Europe (mandatory language courses, instruction in EU values, social inclusiveness, etc.); also ensure the right for the children of asylum seekers to attend schools;
- The **criteria for common standards, benefits-in-kind** and conditions in order to prevent disorderly secondary movement throughout Europe;
- The **family reunification Directive 2003/86/EC to be revised**; differences between Member States in the application of the directive should be avoided;

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**If you have any question
you would like to ask
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