



Believe in *People*

EPP Group **Position Paper**

on **Migration**



EPP Group
in the European Parliament



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EPP Group Position paper on **Migration**

Any approach to migration must be holistic. Every aspect must be considered as part of an all-encompassing strategy with the principle of concrete solidarity at its centre.

In 2014, more than 276000 irregular migrants arrived in the EU, an increase of 155% compared to the previous year. 3 200 lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean last year and more than 1500 since early this year, 700 of whom died in the worst single accident off the Libyan coast.

The number of asylum seekers in the EU28 rose to almost 650 000 in 2014; this marked an increase of 40% compared to 2013.

The number of asylum applicants from Syria rose to 124 000 in 2014 within the 28 EU Member States, which equated to almost 20% of the total from all non-EU countries. Pressure from the East (Ukraine) should not be ignored.

5 Member States (Sweden, Germany, France, Italy and Hungary) accommodate and process the claims of 70% of all the asylum seekers, while Member States located at the external borders of the EU (Italy, Malta, Greece and Bulgaria) face disproportionate asylum and migratory pressure.

In 2013, the number of return decisions issued by the EU Member States was 425 875, while the number of persons returned in practice was 166 975, i.e. less than 40%.





1. Responding to the **asylum system crisis**

Member States must transpose the new Asylum Package completely by July 2015 and enforce it fully.

Fairer distribution and responsibility-sharing between Member States must be more than a slogan: the EPP Group calls on the European Commission to adjust the existing system by complementing it with a binding mechanism for the distribution of asylum seekers once a certain threshold is surpassed in a Member State.

The implementation of such a mechanism could be based on criteria such as the size and population of a country, its economic situation and the number of migrants already in the Member State.

As a complementary measure a renewed intra-EU relocation scheme for refugees must be elaborated.

A clear distinction between legitimate asylum seekers and irregular migrants should be made in EU policies.

Agreements with third countries should be encouraged in order to control and reduce migration flows before migrants arrive at EU borders.

The concept of 'unsafe third countries' (war zones) should be set up to accelerate the processing of applications coming from these countries.

The concept of 'safe third countries' (mostly Western Balkans) should be further improved to accelerate procedures and foster returns in cases of unfounded applications.

The principle of the 'humanitarian visa' should be considered in particular for unaccompanied minors.

Information centres in third countries should be set up and financed in cooperation with the government concerned and the UNHCR.

We should contribute to Member States' capacity to improve their reception conditions in quality and quantity, through financing from the EU budget.

We support stringent return practices for dismissed applicants to achieve fair and swift procedures that either lead to effective integration or immediate return.

An initial examination of asylum claims outside the EU should be considered.

We should create a situation assessment for early preparedness and contingency planning for Member States at EASO, which needs to be provided with additional human and financial resources.

We should set up an IT-based platform at EASO to facilitate sharing of best practice and information and strengthen its coordination capacities to support Member-State actions in the field of resettlement, relocation, information and training capabilities.



2. Exploring legal migration options to **make irregular migration less attractive**

Legal migration should be based on Member-State labour market needs for both low and highly-skilled workers and on the Member State's capacity to integrate migrants, while taking into account demographic challenges and the economic crisis in our countries.

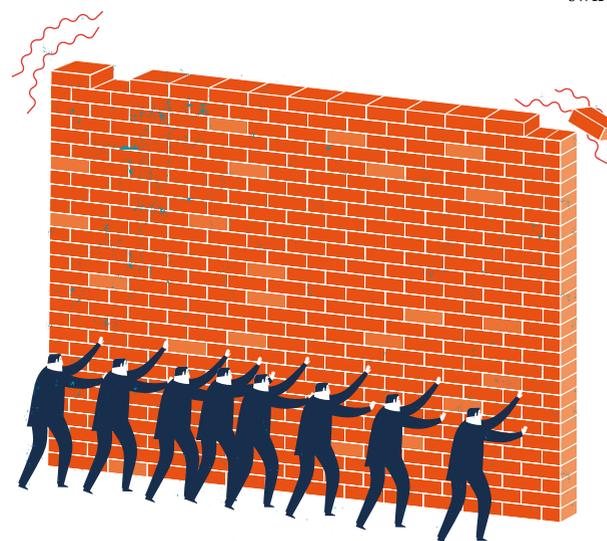
A clear distinction should be made between legal migration instruments for humanitarian purposes and legal migration instruments for Member-State labour market needs.

On legal migration for humanitarian purposes: the EPP Group calls for a more integrated approach at the EU level by calling on all 28 Member States to make better use of resettlement programmes and temporary protection (humanitarian visa).

On legal migration for labour-market needs: the EPP Group calls for: the full implementation of existing EU legislation in this area, such as the Single Permit and the seasonal workers and ICT (Intra-Corporate Transfer) Directives; the swift conclusion of the Students and Researchers Directive; and the revision of the Blue Card Directive.

Member States must ensure that welcoming new migrants goes hand-in-hand with a solid integration policy (mandatory language courses, instruction in EU values, social inclusiveness etc.)

Use of EU funds dedicated to integration policies must be better coordinated.





3. Zero tolerance of **human traffickers, smugglers and facilitators; fostering external border controls**

Trafficking of human beings is a modern form of slavery and transnational criminal networks must be tracked and eradicated where they operate; Member States and the relevant agencies must apply a zero tolerance strategy.

Migration cannot be a profitable business for traffickers and smugglers that use new routes to the EU and employ new methods (ghost ships) to exploit migrants. The EU and its Member States must prohibit criminal and terrorist organisations from using their profits to strengthen their activities and structures.

The EPP Group calls for an EU-UN military naval operation off Libya's coast to stop human trafficking, dismantle smugglers' networks and proceed to the systematic capture and destruction of all the vessels used by smugglers.

EUROPOL, Frontex and EUROSUR, as the agencies spearheading European action on migration, must be given adequate resources (staff and equipment) by all Member States to fulfil their duties as well as the legal means to exchange valuable data.

Identity and document fraud and trafficking must be detected and countered effectively.

Member State and EUROPOL capacities to cooperate with third-country law enforcement authorities must be improved, including through joint operations to dismantle networks of traffickers and organised crime.

Competences for external border controls must be enhanced: when Frontex is in charge of an operation, the command should be with Frontex and not with the requesting Member State.

Cooperation with Turkey, Mali and Niger (ongoing CFSP operations) must be enhanced and play a priority role in the fight against irregular migration, organised crime and human trafficking.

Particular attention should be given to unaccompanied minors who are victims of human trafficking.



4. How to deal with the **Waves** of irregular migrants

As an immediate and priority response, the EU and the Member States must allocate more resources to search and rescue capacities and increase missions to save lives.

Boarding unsafe and suicidal vessels will only become impossible through effectively addressing, together with third countries, the root causes of migration, instead of merely dealing with its effects.

Agreeing on more targeted development aid, also for border policy and law enforcement capacities, is essential.

Reception and protection capabilities in countries of transit (in the EU and third countries) must be developed.

Strict conditions linking development and political goals (good governance) with EU financial aid must be applied.

We must support third countries of transit and origin in preventing departures.

Stringent return policies for irregular migrants must be enforced, including through an EU programme for joint returns under Frontex coordination.

We must ensure that the policies and actions adopted do not create a pull-factor effect.

We must step up security and surveillance at our external borders, including by making use of new technologies, ensuring better implementation of and coordination between the already existing IT systems such as VIS and SIS II, using the future instruments defined in the Smart Borders Package and the robust application of the new Schengen evaluation mechanism. All Member States must make full use of and update existing databases. Member States must fulfil their obligation to collect the fingerprints of any newly-arriving person (Eurodac).

Contributions to the Frontex budget should be increased, its joint operations strengthened and the European Borders Guards team should be deployed, as defined in the new Frontex Regulation.

Diplomatic and UN-led efforts aiming at stabilising neighbouring conflict areas (Libya, Syria, Ukraine...) where wars and failed states are facilitating all kinds of trafficking should be promoted and supported. The rapid development of IS and the further escalation of the Russia-Ukraine military conflict will ultimately have an impact on the mass influx of migrants and flows of displaced people.



5. Reframing the **cooperation strategy** with **third countries**

External relations, development policy and humanitarian aid have to be interlinked and coordinated with internal policies and internal security in order to be successful.

The efficiency of the current instruments (mobility partnerships, return and readmission agreements and regional cooperation networks) must be evaluated.

Humanitarian aid and support systems must be improved to ease the burden of countries bordering war zones (eg. Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon in the case of the Syria conflict). Resettlement programmes must be reinforced.

We must help the development of sustainable States that provide for living conditions that allow people to stay in their countries of origin.

The huge challenge posed by millions of refugees in the Middle East and on the African continent, especially in the sub-Saharan zone, must be tackled. The EU must create more programmes that enhance regional relocation and support regional development and cooperation networks. We stress the importance of the existing CFSP operations in Mali and Niger to that end.

The security and counter-terrorism aspect of Justice and Home Affairs diplomacy should be fostered and more integrated, given the impact of Islamic state evolution on the mass influx of migrants and/or asylum seekers.



EPP Group

in the European Parliament

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