



**Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament**

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The President

Brussels, 11th July 2017

**To Mr Donald Tusk,
President of the European Council**

Dear President,





Dear Donald,

A little less than a month ago, together with the leaders of the Greens and GUE Groups in the European Parliament, I was addressing you yet another letter, calling for achieving a significant progress also at Council level, with respect to the Dublin revision, the relocation and the legal migration - related matters, in order to equally reflect the current state of play within the European Parliament.

Meanwhile, the Mediterranean Sea continued witnessing many human tragedies in the absence of a truly European and dignified response. The arrival of thousands of migrants to Europe through the Italian coasts is not sustainable any more with the current policies, drifting away not only from our European principle of solidarity between Member States, but also from the respect of our obligations towards human rights and international protection.

The figures speak for themselves: more than 60,000 migrants in Italy by sea in the first five months of 2017, with more than 1,500 reported to have died in the Mediterranean. The number of migrants from Libya this year is on course to exceed the 200,000 recorded last year.

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Italy's neighbours have *de facto* closed their borders in an attempt to keep migrants from moving northward. Some other EU Member States, such as Poland and Hungary, have refused to stand up to their duties by not agreeing to host asylum-seekers, while others have refused to open their Mediterranean harbours to even a single rescue ship. Other Member States have asked for the decrease of the already slight committed number of people to be hosted. Such an outrageous situation cannot continue. Those who refuse must take the political and moral responsibility for undermining not only the social and political stability of Italy, but also that of the whole of Europe. Against this background, it is not wonder that anti-European parties proliferate in Europe, given that a humanitarian crisis of this magnitude finds its only answer coming from the European governments in the form of a closed-doors policy.

This horse-trading in reducing the number of persons to be relocated and hosted only displays the EU's incapacity to put in place its own decisions and set up a fair system of distribution of common responsibilities. It also highlights the lack of solidarity with thousands of persons, as well as among Member States and towards less wealthy third countries, which are struggling with the migration challenge.

Therefore, dear President Tusk, the EU's international influence and image are at stake, unless proper solutions are not only found but implemented too.

Against this background, the Socialists and Democrats Group, is urging you to call for an extraordinary European Council meeting, before the summer break, to give an immediate and concrete answer to the ongoing migration crisis that dramatically affects not only Italy, but also the entire political and social stability of Europe. It would be an outrageous mistake and a dreadful message to European citizens to wait for the next October 18th to call for the next EU Council meeting.

Additionally, we are arguing that it is indispensable to finally apply the relocation mechanism to all third countries' nationalities. As already highlighted in my previous letter, we are deeply unsettled about the ongoing debate within the EU Council on the revision of the Dublin regulation, which is insufficient and departs radically from the European Parliament's position. The first country of irregular entry criterion and a centralized and permanent mechanism of fair responsibility sharing among Member States are crucial.

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The granting humanitarian visas will ensure safe transfer of refugees to Europe. We need to work towards stabilising Libya and further invest in Africa in order to truly contain the causes of these enormous migratory flows.

As we have often pointed out, a holistic approach must involve the extension of the framework for legal migration, to reflect the positive and concrete contribution that migrants make to the European economy, and to provide an alternative route for migrants to reach the EU without resorting to criminal smugglers. In that regard, we need harmonised, efficient and ambitious legal channels of migration, with no competing parallel national schemes.

Finally, the accountability of the European institutions seems insufficient also with respect to the newly set up FRONTEX operation “Triton” which we consider inadequately equipped with relevant financial resources, having a limited geographical area of action and, foremost, focusing its actions too much on border guard instead of rescuing human lives. Consequently, we need a broader involvement of Member States in managing the rescue of migrants and a more sustainable sharing of this burden among them, while also involving EU partners from the Mediterranean basin.

We hope we can count on your support to fight for these proposals and to promote sustainable common European solutions based on solidarity, fair responsibility sharing and full respect of human rights. Every effort, if equally shared, is sustainable for everyone.

Allow me to conclude by stressing that we need to face together this major European test, on which the future of our Union is at stake. Nobody should forget, dear President Tusk, that history will not forgive those who will not be able to rise up to this challenge and assess its importance accordingly.

Yours sincerely,



Gianni Pittella

President of the S&D Group