

A progressive roadmap for a common immigration and asylum policy

During the tragic events in Lampedusa of 3rd October 2013, 366 people have lost their lives, among them many women, children, toddlers.

On 11th October 2013 again in Malta's search and rescue area many people lost their lives and many were saved in an extraordinary effort deployed by both Italy and Malta, constantly under pressure.

IOM has recently reminded that since 1993 more than 20000 people have lost their lives at sea trying to reach European shores.

The latest tragedy in Lampedusa must be a wakeup call to the whole of the European Union. A community of values and principles cannot tolerate that people die along its external borders seeking protection and dignity.

We point out that no progress has been made in the last five years towards a real EU common immigration policy.

As progressive parliamentary leaders, we think that an assessment of the EU immigration and asylum policies is needed, considering the existing legal framework, starting from the assumption that our external borders, being land or sea, are borders of all and have to be managed based on real solidarity among Member states as enshrined in article 80 TFEU.

A new immigration and asylum policies of the EU as we see it should place individuals, their dignity, safety and protection at the centre of European action and it should be focused on a strong political dialogue and partnership with countries of origin and with countries of transit, supporting democratization processes, institution building, development, joint border management, fight against smuggling and trafficking of human beings and joint protection of people in distress, including opening legal channels for controlled mobility to the EU.

We call on Member States heads of state and government meeting in the EU summit today to do away with vetoes and hesitations and provide urgent action grounded in a stronger intra EU solidarity along four lines:

- Safe entry to the EU must be ensured to people in need based on existing EU tools. The right to seek asylum and international protection must be fully assured and the responsibility thereof fully shared among Member States through joint resettlement and relocation efforts and joint processing of claims in cooperation with EASO, using funds available in the EU asylum fund. Issuing humanitarian visa in third countries based on agreed criteria through a case by case examination is an option to be explored.

- The future wide operation by Frontex in the Mediterranean must see the involvement of all Member States and set a virtuous precedent in responsibility sharing in integrated border management, including regarding land borders in distress. Fresh EU funding must be ensured by this operation that must have primarily a search and rescue mission, respecting strictly the principle of non-refoulement and supported by the involvement of UNHCR and IOM.

- Reception of asylum seekers in Member States must be made in dignity and fully applying the newly adopted EU directives on a common procedure and on reception

conditions. In this respect, we strongly plead for the repeal of legislation criminalizing migrants and asylum seekers and hampering action for a dignified treatment of people in distress.

- Prevention must become an essential element of EU strategy. Social, human, economic development in countries of origin must become a political priority for the EU, together with institution building, democratisation, and human rights consolidation. A renewed and urgent effort must be deployed by EEAS and the Commission to enter into a political dialogue with Libyan and Egyptian authorities, as sensitive and difficult this may be in countries undergoing fragile institutional consolidation, in order to fight against criminal networks dealing with smuggling and trafficking in human being and to ensure safety and protection of people in need, in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM.

As the EU task force will have to deal with both political and operational tasks, we believe that all EU actions should have a strong democratic dimension and we strongly plead for the EP and national parliaments to be fully and constantly involved all through the process.

Hannes Swoboda - President of the S&D Group at the European Parliament

Roberto Speranza - President of the parliamentary Group of PD - Camera dei Deputati - Italy

Carmelo Abela - President of the parliamentary Group of PL - Malta

Soraya Rodriguez - Spokesperson of the parliamentary Group of PSOE on justice - Spain

Antonio Camacho - Spokesperson of the parliamentary Group of PSOE on justice - Spain

Marietta Karamanli - Vice President of the parliamentary Group of PS at the Assemblée Nationale - France

Alberto Martins - President of the parliamentary Group of PS at the Assembleia da República - Portugal