en | fr | de

Publication | 27.04.2015

Latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

Tabled by ***Ska Keller, Judith Sargentini, Bodil Ceballos, Eva Joly, Jean Lambert, Barbara Lochbihler, Davor Škrlec, Ulrike Lunacek, Josep-Maria Terricabras, Ernest Urtasun*** *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

– having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,

– having regard to the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the additional protocol thereto,

– having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2013 on EU and Member State measures to tackle the flow of refugees as a result of the conflict in Syria ,

– having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2013 on migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa ,

– having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2014 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration ,

– having regard to the 10-point action plan proposed by the Commission ahead of the extraordinary European Council of 23 April 2015,

– having regard to the statement adopted following the extraordinary European Council of 23 April 2015,

– having regard to the UNHCR Central Mediterranean Sea initiative and to the UNHCR proposals to address current and future arrivals of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Europe,

– having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the drowning of more than 800 people was the worst catastrophe in the Mediterranean since the Second World War, and whereas at least 1500 migrants have died since the beginning of 2015, with

many more missing;

B. whereas at least 30 000 persons have died at sea in the past twenty years, and this fact underlines the need to take drastically different action and do everything possible to save the lives of people at risk of drowning and the need for Member States to abide by their international sea rescue obligations;

C. whereas the Mare Nostrum patrolling, rescue and surveillance operation launched by Italy to enhance the humanitarian rescue activities in the Mediterranean, rescued 150 810 migrants over its 364 days of existence; whereas, however, other Member States were not willing to support the Italian efforts to rescue people; whereas the Italian Government has in consequence ended Mare Nostrum;

D. whereas the joint operation Triton, coordinated by FRONTEX, became fully operational on 1 November 2014; whereas Triton has only a third of Mare Nostrum's geographical scope; whereas the operational area of Triton covers only 30 sea miles off the Italian coast, while Mare Nostrum was operating on the high seas, much closer to the Libyan coast; whereas most refugee boats get into distress close to the Libyan coast; where the mandate of FRONTEX is to carry out border surveillance and prevent illegal migration, and it therefore cannot therefore undertake search and rescue proactively, but only as a secondary task where a ship or vessel is in distress; acknowledging, however, that Triton assets have been used for search and rescue under the coordination of the Italian Search and Rescue Coordination Centre;

E. whereas the possibilities for people in need of protection to legally enter the EU are very limited; whereas estimates suggest that 90 % of asylum seekers actually enter the EU in an irregular manner; whereas the number of Schengen visas granted to Syrian nationals has dramatically dropped in the course of the Syrian war, from 30 000 in 2010 to almost zero in 2013; whereas the use of humanitarian visas is very limited in the EU, with only half of all Member States having some form of humanitarian visa at all, granted usually only on an exceptional basis; whereas Parliament has generally advocated the use of Protected Entry Procedures (PEPs); whereas in its resolution of 2 April 2014 on the mid-term review of the Stockholm Programme Parliament, in particular, called on the Member States to 'make use of the current provisions of the Visa Code and the Schengen Borders Code allowing the issuing of humanitarian visas' ;

F. whereas the countries neighbouring Syria are, according to UNHCR estimates, hosting an estimated 3.9 million Syrian refugees; whereas EU Member States have taken only 37 000 Syrian refugees via the UNHCR resettlement programme, while UNHCR is calling for 10 % of Syrian refugees to be resettled (370 000) and is urgently looking for at least 130 000 resettlement places for refugees with special protection needs; whereas almost half of the Member States (13) have so far not resettled a single refugee;

G. whereas the EU and its Member States are effectively contributing to nurturing the criminal and dangerous business of human smuggling by building fences and increasingly sealing off their external borders against irregular migration , without provide possibilities of legal access;

H. whereas Member States have called for the reinforcement of political cooperation with African partners at all levels in order to tackle the causes of illegal migration and combat the smuggling and trafficking of human beings; whereas on the margins of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council of 12 March 2015 the interior ministers of France, Germany and Spain, as well as the Commission, discussed a proposal by Italian Interior Minister Angelino Alfano to outsource search and rescue and maritime control of EU borders to countries such as Egypt or Tunisia, which would then bring the rescued migrants to their shores; whereas this proposal aims to produce a 'real deterrent effect', so that fewer migrants would be ready to put their lives at risk to reach Europe's coasts; whereas the interior ministers also discussed the possibilities of setting up refugee camps in North Africa and of processing asylum applications in those camps;

I. whereas Eurostat data indicate that only five Member States take three quarters of all refugees in the EU, and whereas countries like Italy, Greece and Malta are at the limits of their reception capacities;

1. Calls, as a matter of urgency and in light of the increasing numbers of deaths at the sea and land borders of the EU, for a radical shift in the priorities of the EU's asylum policies, in order to avoid further death tolls, provide safe and legal access to the EU for those who seek protection, safeguard the right of spontaneous application for asylum at the Union's external borders and strengthen solidarity and responsibility-sharing for asylum seekers in the Union;

2. Is disappointed by the outcome of the extraordinary meeting held on the subject of migration by the European Council on 23 April 2015, and deeply regrets the failure of the heads of state and governments to agree on measures that would effectively address the root causes of the crisis in the Mediterranean and prevent further catastrophes;

3. Takes note of the call to rapidly reinforce the EU's Triton operation by tripling its funding for 2015 and 2016 and thereby allowing a more prominent presence in the Mediterranean of ships which could be involved in search and rescue operations; calls for this increase to be devoted solely to search and rescue in order to save lives; recalls, however, the restrictive mandate of FRONTEX concerning the priority of border surveillance over search and rescue operations, and deeply regrets the fact that the Member States could not agree on extending the operational area of Triton closer to where most refugee boats actually get into distress; calls therefore, as a matter of urgency, on the Member States to modify the operational plan of Triton so as to extend its operation area to the high seas and include search and rescue;

4. Calls for a robust and permanent humanitarian European rescue operation, which, like Mare Nostrum, would operate on the high seas and to which all Member States would contribute financially and with equipment and assets; urges the EU to co-fund such an operation, and warns the Council and Commission that Parliament could vote against the 2016 budget in the event of no funding being provided for search and rescue;

5. Regrets the lack of any substantial proposals in the statement of the European Council to ensure safe and legal access to the EU for both asylum seekers and migrants;

6. Urges the Member States to refrain from blocking strong common rules on humanitarian visas in the current negotiations on the Visa Code; calls on the Member States to make full use of the existing possibilities for issuing humanitarian visas at their embassies and consular offices so that persons in need of protection can enter the EU in a safe way, by ferry or by plane instead of putting their lives at risk on a unseaworthy smuggling boat;

7. Calls for the immediate lifting of visa requirements for Syrian refugees; calls on the Member States and the Commission to seriously consider applying the Temporary Protection Directive; points out that if the EU were to invoke that directive in relation to Syria, all Syrians could be granted residence permits for the entire duration of the protection period, giving them work authorisation and access to accommodation and medical treatment; stresses that such a mechanism could also encourage Member States to relocate beneficiaries from other Member States where reception capacity is overwhelmed; recalls that Parliament had already, in 2013, asked for the mobilisation of the Temporary Protection Directive to address the Syrian crisis;

8. Welcomes the envisaged pilot project on resettlement across the EU (in addition to resettlement by individual Member States); regrets, however, the unambitious goal of resettling only 5000 Syrian refugees; recalls that UNHCR is looking for 130.000 resettlement places at the very minimum; strongly encourages Member States to make available resettlement places, in particular those Member States which so far have not contributed to resettlement at all; asks the Commission to make a proposal for a European resettlement

programme with binding obligations for Member States to take refugees according to a fair distribution key which would take into account of population size and economic indicators, as well as of numbers of refugees already taken;

9. Calls on the Member States to make full use of further possibilities to ensure safe and legal access to the EU, such as extended family reunification, private sponsorship programmes, as well as study and labour migration schemes, so that people in need of international protection can reach safety in Europe without having to resort to criminal smugglers and dangerous irregular border and sea crossings;

10. Calls on the Member States to prioritise safe and legal access for refugees as well as for migrants, and to refer EU funding from restrictive measures against immigration such as building fences and detention centres for this purpose;

11. Is deeply concerned at the modes of cooperation with third countries envisaged by the European Council to prevent irregular migration to Europe;

12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to immediately suspend cooperation on preventing irregular migration and improving border controls with third countries such as Eritrea and Egypt, which are actually surrendering refugees, and suspend any financial assistance to such regimes in light of UN and NGO reports on human rights abuses; calls for the Khartoum process to be replaced by a process based on full respect for human rights and focused on improving living conditions so as to address the root causes of migration;

13. Calls on the Commission to review all policies having external effects, such as trade, fisheries and agriculture, addressing the structural causes of immigration flows to Europe, in accordance with Article 208 TFEU;

14. Rejects proposals by Member States to set up European asylum centres in third countries and to involve Northern African countries in European search and rescue with the aim of intercepting refugees and returning them to African shores; calls on the Commission, in this regard, to provide Parliament with an evaluation of the compliance of these proposals with international law, in particular the Geneva Convention, and of any other practical and legal obstacles to their implementation;

15. Rejects the idea put forward by the European Council of linking civilian and military operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to migration policies; also rejects the idea of immediately launching a CSDP operation aimed at using military force against vessels used by smugglers; calls on the European Council and the Vice-President / High Representative to present as a first step a political concept which explains, inter alia, how to ensure compliance with national laws of Northern African countries and European and international law and norms, so that the UN Charter is fully respected and any harm to the lives of civilians or to coastal infrastructure is avoided;

16. Rejects, equally, the plan to link land border controls and monitoring in Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Mali and Niger to ongoing CSDP missions, as most of these small missions have a very specific mandate focusing on improving security in unstable countries and contributing to peace-building efforts of African and international organisations such as the AU and the UN; believes that the EU should prioritise solving the conflicts which lead to migration flows instead of focusing on deterrence and the management of consequences;

17. Stresses that in line with the Lisbon Treaty and its Article 43, the EU could use the naval capabilities of its Member States in the context of the CSDP to step up efforts regarding humanitarian and rescue tasks in the Mediterranean;

18. Calls on the High Representative to use all available diplomatic and external relations instruments to address the root causes of political crises and armed conflicts which are forcing millions to leave their homes;

19. Takes note of the Member States' call for swift action to fight smuggling in accordance with international law; calls, however, on the Member States, in this context, to focus on the fight against smuggling by means of cooperation with EUROPOL, FRONTEX, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and EUROJUST; recalls that fighting smugglers will only be made to work effectively by ensuring safe and legal entry and thereby drying out their criminal and brutal business;

20. Calls for the EU and the Member States to amend or review any legislation sanctioning people assisting migrants in distress at sea; calls on the Commission to review Council Directive 2002/90/EC, which defines the sanctions in the event of facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence, in order to clarify that the provision of humanitarian assistance to migrants at sea who are in distress is to be welcomed, and is not an action which should ever lead to any form of sanction;

21. Is disappointed that the European Council could not agree on a programme for relocating refugees from Member States which are at the limits of their reception capacities such as Italy, Greece or Malta, to other Member States less exposed to arrivals of refugees and migrants; condemns the reluctance by many Member States to share responsibility by relocating refugees from other parts of the EU, and urgently calls on the Commission and the Member States to present an ambitious proposal in this regard based on the letter and spirit of Articles 33 and 36 of the Dublin Regulation;

22. Takes note of the scheduled review of the functioning of the Dublin Regulation in 2016 and of the announcement of the Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs that the Dublin system will be reviewed already this year; calls on the Commission to explore alternatives to the current Dublin system which would be fairer to both Member States and asylum seekers; suggests that a system under which asylum seekers could apply for asylum in a Member State where they already have family ties, community links or better employment prospects would significantly improve their integration prospects; in addition, such a system would significantly reduce irregular secondary movements within the EU, as well as the need for coercive measures such as detention of asylum seekers for the purpose of transferring them back to the Member State responsible; suggests further that a distribution key could be used to develop a fair allocation of funding among Member States and to allocate asylum seekers who have no strong reasons for preferring one or another Member State; furthermore, calls on the Commission to put forward proposals to allow the mutual recognition of positive asylum decisions and the transfer of international protection status within the EU;

23. Calls on the Member States, for the time being, to effectively use the full potential of the Dublin Regulation to show solidarity, including the clauses relating to family reunification and unaccompanied minors and the discretionary clause;

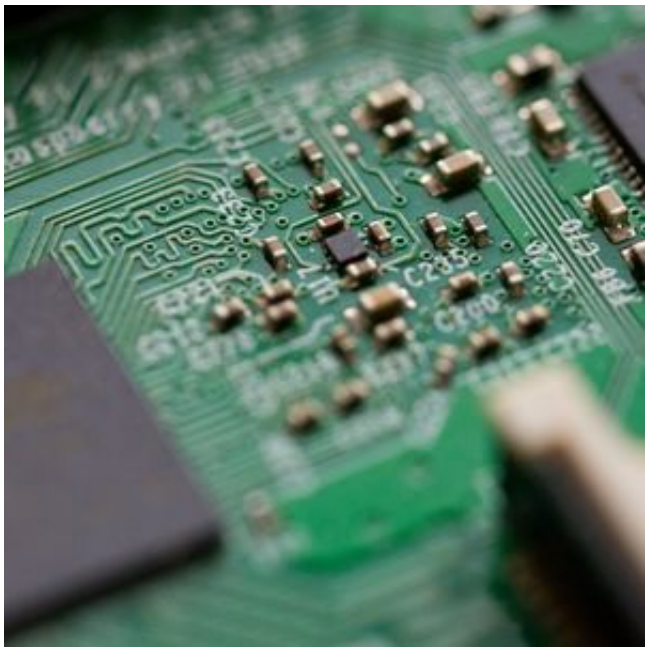
24. Welcomes the call for a rapid and full transposition and effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System by all participating Member States;

25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Presidents of the parliaments of the Member States.

Recommended

Press release

chris-ried



Digital Fairness Act falls short on addictive design

11.11.2026

Press release

[Ukrainian children in Russia: Parliament to call for u…]

11.11.2026

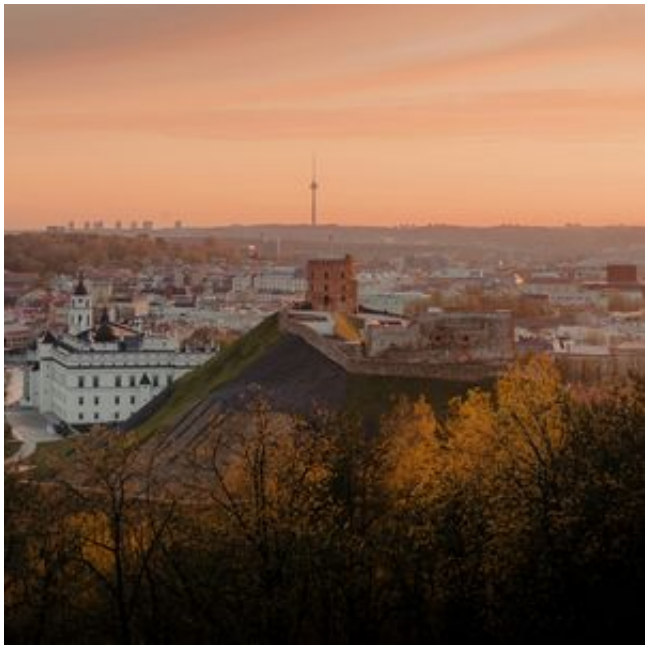
Press release

Redek Kozak

[Czech public media under attack - with Markéta Gregoro…]

11.11.2026

Press release



[Greens/EFA in Vilnius: Lithuanian Presidency must lead…]

05.11.2026

Responsible MEPs

Eva Joly

Member

Ska Keller

Member

Jean Lambert

Member

Barbara Lochbihler

Member

Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

Judith Sargentini

Member

Davor Skrlec

Member

Josep Maria Terricabras

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

Ernest Urtasun

Vice-President

Bodil Valero

Vice-President

Please share

- E-Mail