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A welcoming Europe for all

Our views on asylum and migration

Since the start of the current legislature in 2014, European citizens have been engaged in an intensifying debate surrounding migration. Migration is a natural phenomenon and should be managed as such. Attempting to stop it by building walls and fences at the borders or by criminalising actors providing humanitarian assistance and adopting restrictive migration policies, would not only fail to reduce or stop migration, but it would also contribute to enhancing the human despair of those fleeing from wars, poverty and climate disasters and to creating more distrust and discrimination towards migrants, more xenophobia and more failures in migration management. This is an unacceptable scenario that the Greens/EFA Group is committed to prevent.

We believe that a migration and asylum policy founded on human rights and solidarity is urgently needed and that migration should be managed responsibly and effectively. The right to asylum shall be upheld and the human rights of all migrants shall be respected, as provided by international and human rights laws, including the Geneva Convention, to which the EU is party.

No more deaths at sea

Refugees and migrants attempting to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea are losing their lives at an alarming rate in 2018 and 2019 and routes to Europe are five times deadlier as compared to 2015. While arrivals keep falling - they have dropped by 86% in 2018 as compared to 2015 - migration routes to Europe have never been so deadly: in 2018, an estimated 2,277 persons died or went missing crossing the Mediterranean: **more than six lives were lost on average every day**. Cuts in search and rescue operations have reinforced the position of the Mediterranean as the world's deadliest sea crossing.

The decision of some Member States to close their ports to rescue vessels carrying out vital search and rescue operations is unbearable. **The EU has a humanitarian responsibility, and a moral duty, to rescue people in danger.**

In 2018, the Greens/EFA Group led in the European Parliament the adoption of a resolution to prevent humanitarian assistance from being criminalised. The resolution calls for the urgent adoption of guidelines

for Member States specifying which forms of facilitation should not be criminalised. The current legislation, the so-called 2002 "Facilitation Directive", requires Member States to adopt sanctions for persons who assist with irregular entry or irregular residence. The Directive provides, however, for an exemption if the assistance is humanitarian in nature. Today, only a quarter of the EU Member States have decided to transpose this exemption clause into national legislation and we are calling on the European Commission to urge Member States not to criminalise humanitarian assistance.

We need more political will

Managing migration is one of the most urgent and profound tests for Europe and the world today. Migration is an engine of social and economic growth, innovation and sustainable development, creating and strengthening bonds between countries and societies. Yet, when poorly managed, it is also a source of divisions within and between Member States and societies, often leaving migrants vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and increasing inequalities in society as a whole.

In the current legislature, the inability of the EU Member States to find an agreement to reform the current Common European Asylum System in a spirit of solidarity and to provide safe and regular channels for asylum seekers and migrants alike have cast a shadow over the broader benefits of migration. It is time to reverse those trends, to recommit to protecting lives and rights of all migrants and to make migration work for all.

No fewer than 8 pieces of legislation were adopted by the Parliament during this legislature in order to comprehensively reform the Common European Asylum System and base it on solidarity between Member States and responsibility sharing. Not a single one entered into force because the national governments in Council refused to agree and to make any progress. **Achieving a forward-looking and sustainable reform of the Common European Asylum System will remain a key priority for the Greens/EFA throughout the upcoming legislature.**

The future we want: policies based on human rights and solidarity

We Greens have long been advocating for a European asylum system which is based on solidarity and responsibility-sharing among Member States. We call for a fair distribution mechanism as part of a comprehensive reform of the Dublin Regulation, which takes into account, as far as is possible, the ties and preferences of asylum seekers to a certain Member State, such as family relations, community links and knowledge of language. Every Member State must contribute to hosting refugees. By introducing a fair and binding distribution mechanism, the EU can drastically expand its protection capacity for refugees. Taking preferences into account improves the prospects of integration.

The high pressure on our asylum system is also due to the lack of alternative ways to get a residence status in the EU. Proper and well-managed ways of legal migration should be offered. This is why **we want the establishment of legal and safe channels for migration, including flexible and realistic possibilities for family reunification, and for migrant workers and students to come to the European Union in a safe and legal way**. Restrictive migration policies have created a lucrative market for smuggling rings, a market which could not exist without these restrictions. The EU and the Member States are now investing millions of euros in order to fight the smuggling industry that its own restrictive policies have created. Paradoxically, in the name of securing borders, many states have actually lost control over their borders, as smuggling rings will generally be ahead of the game.

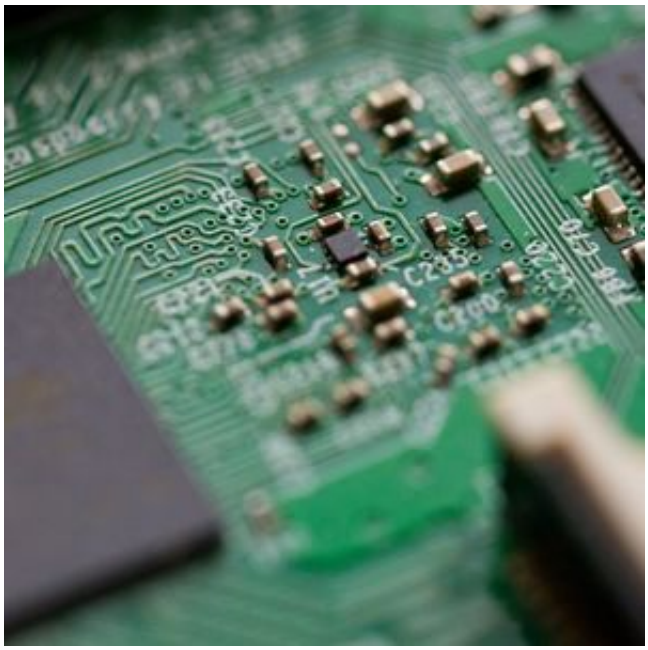
Regulated mobility would be much more efficient and would mean better border management. Consistent with our repeated call for the establishment of safe and legal pathways for migration, the Greens/EFA fought hard to get a proposal adopted in December 2018 to establish an EU-level humanitarian visa system . The proposal will allow asylum seekers to apply for visas at embassies and consulates outside the EU, through which they can legally travel to an EU country and seek asylum.

On the other hand, the EU must adopt an Immigration Code, providing for visa opportunities for families to be reunited and for work at different skills levels. It should also allow migrants already staying in the EU to change their status more easily, for instance from student to employee. This would incentivise migrants to come to the European Union in full respect of visa conditions and avoiding exploitation and perilous journeys.

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