Press release | 20.04.2015

Mediterranean refugee tragedy

EU funded sea rescue programme must be urgently agreed

Commenting ahead of today's meeting of EU foreign affairs and internal affairs ministers, which will discuss last week's tragedies involving refugees in the Mediterranean, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** and **Philippe Lamberts** said:

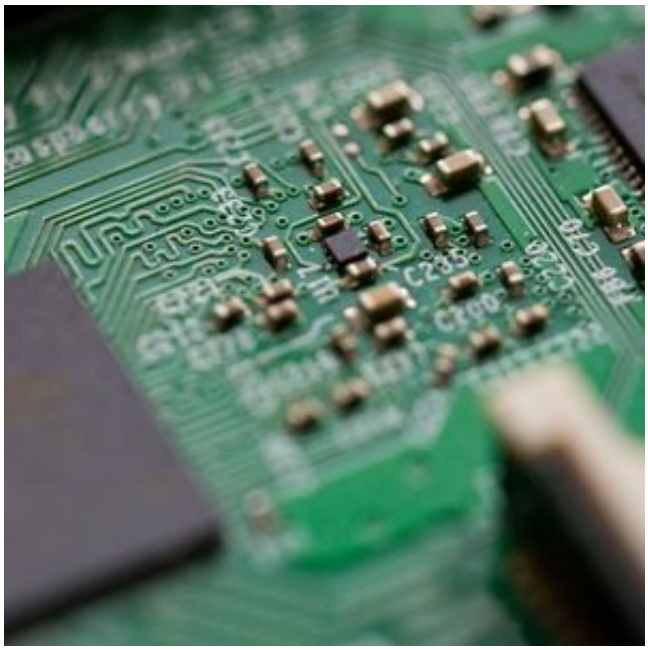
"We need a permanent EU-funded programme for search and rescue of refugees. EU governments can no longer continue wringing their hands at each Mediterranean catastrophe and then turn their backs; they must immediately set up a search and rescue programme, funded from the EU budget on a long-term basis. Clearly, we also need to combat smugglers, strengthen humanitarian aid and improve our asylum and migration policies, but people in desperate situations will continue to flee and risk their lives to seek refuge in Europe. We cannot continue to let them die in doing so.

"The necessary funds for a sea rescue programme could be adapted on an annual basis but it must begin immediately and this implies diverting funding from existing programmes, like the EU's 'Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund' and border protection funds. The European Parliament will have a co-decision role on such a proposal to adapt the EU budget and we call on all political groups to take this into account in the ongoing negotiations on the 2016 EU budget and to join us in putting pressure on the European Commission and EU governments to ensure this vital change is made."

The Greens/EFA group has called for a debate at next week's European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg with the responsible EU commissioners and the EU presidency.

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Responsible MEPs



Rebecca Harms

Member



Philippe Lamberts

Member

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