



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



European Centre for Economic,
Policy Analysis and Affairs

Research paper

Results of the survey on the
“Situation in the Mediterranean
and the need for a holistic
approach to migration”

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A comprehensive and progressive approach to migration: how S&D shapes migration policies in the EU

A progressive EU immigration and asylum policy should place individuals, their dignity, safety and protection at the centre of European action. **That is why as a Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament we welcomed this own-initiative** because it allows to shaping the EU migration policies.

S&D and migration policies priorities

We are aware that to manage migration flows, the EU must address the political and economic root causes of migration in countries of origin. **According to our group, the EU must prioritize social, human and economic development, institution building, democratization, and the consolidation of human rights.**

S&D and integration policies

European migration policies have focused more on repressive answers to migration flows than on inclusive ones. We know that it is in the interest of the EU and its citizens to ensure that migrants have the chance to integrate and play a full role in society.

The European Parliament and the National Parliaments involvement

We believe that the European Parliament and national parliaments in the EU are the voice and the House of EU citizens: **all EU actions in migration policies should have a strong democratic dimension** and we want the EP and national parliaments to be fully involved throughout the decision-making process.

The S&D commitment to the European Parliament

We are aware of the difficulties facing Europe today to manage the migration crisis. We believe that a holistic approach is needed, one that embodies the principle of solidarity, thus enabling Member States to share responsibility fairly and to maintain a focus on human rights.

The strategic own initiative report is mainly divided into eight subjects, which include: solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility among Member States; enforcement of search and rescue operations; tackling criminal smuggling, trafficking and labor exploitation of irregular migrants; border management and visa policy; developing safe and lawful routes for asylum seekers and refugees into the EU; cooperation with third countries; analysis on how Home Affairs funds are spent in migration & development; and the effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System.

LIBE committee meetings

During this year, the LIBE Committee (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs) at the European Parliament has held a great number of meetings regarding “the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic approach to migration”. Highly qualified experts, European Commission officials as well as officials of several European agencies operating in the field of migration have taken part in these meetings, during which we were able to define a clear strategy in writing the report and identifying related issues.

The purpose of this research

Our group and I have always believed in dialogue and in the necessity of involving people directly impacted by the issues and causes to which our work is devoted. The needs and the will of these people always have been at core of our political commitment, which we consider to be a precondition. However, this core tenet is all too often neglected.

The collecting and analysis of the comments, the suggestions and observations of the respondents will contribute in enriching the debate within the S&D group in light of the writing of the strategic report.

Moving forward

My commitment and the commitment of the S&D Group will not end with the vote in the Parliament next spring. **We will continue our job to prioritize the human dimension of migration** in order to develop and enforce safer and legal avenues to enter Europe.

1. POLICY CONTEXT

Migration and EU policy Agenda

Over the last few years, Home Affairs policies in general and migration in particular have been at the top of the policy agenda across the EU and its Member States. The desperate accounts of asylum seekers have shocked the global opinion; the numerous deaths of refugees in transit have necessitated the need for political action.

Migration and the media pressure

The topic of migration is an extensively covered topic in the media, often bringing political, social and cultural aspects into play. This in turn puts high pressure on decision makers to address these issues with a quick and timely response. European institutions have constantly tried to react by putting in place policies both in the short and long-term in response to these pressures. However, the divergent political interests among the different EU institutions and the Member States often have dramatically delayed such response.

New European Agenda on Migration

Nevertheless, the new European Agenda on Migration communicated by the European Commission last May set out four pillars to better manage migration. However, at this stage, it is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented policies under the Agenda.

Critics of the new European Agenda on Migration

There have been some critiques of the Agenda, namely in regards to implementing internal solidarity among Member States when some are hesitant or outright against the tenet. Other criticisms include enforcing repatriation without violating fundamental rights or carrying out the Agenda's objectives with little budget and resources.

The EU Parliament strategic own-initiative

During this period, the European Parliament launched its Strategic own-initiative on the situation in the Mediterranean Sea and the need for a holistic approach to migration. The initiative includes solidarity and the fair-sharing of responsibility, border management and visa policy, developing safe and lawful routes for asylum seekers and refugees into the EU, developing a strategy for cooperating with third countries, developing adequate legal economic migration, examining the use of funding in the area of migration and implementing the Common European Asylum System.

2. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of 47 questions. Some of them were structured as multiple-choice questions, while others were open questions in order to collect comments and/or feedbacks on particularly problematic issues.

The questionnaire has been finalized in this way:

1. A first draft of the questionnaire was prepared;
2. Then, the questionnaire was sent to experts for feedback;
3. A focus group was organized with an EU Home Affair directorate official;
4. Online test.

Data collection

The questionnaires were collected through an online system. The portal remained open from 01/09/2015 to 01/12/2015. In order to collect the largest number of questionnaires, the link of the questionnaires was spread by various methods:

1. The ECEPAA newsletter, which includes more than 15.000 email addresses;
2. LinkedIn;
3. Facebook.

The questionnaire was also spread through the personal Facebook page of Cecile Kyenge.

The total accesses to the questionnaire have been 259, while the questionnaires completed amounted at 31.

Please note that the (*) is used to highlight those questions where respondents had the possibility to choose more than one answer.

3. KEY OBSERVATIONS

3.1 SOLIDARITY AND INTERNAL COOPERATION

How to express solidarity*

In the field of asylum and immigration, the principle of solidarity and the fair share of responsibility is defined in Art. 80 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). However, the Treaty does not define the content of the principle nor its practical application. In this framework, according to the sample, the most important instruments that concretely express the principle of solidarity are: the support of qualified personnel to handle asylum seekers at their initial reception (48,3%), and economic transfers to Member States under migratory pressure (38,7%), which would help border countries facing the heaviest burden of responsibility. In addition, the management of common borders (35,5%) is an effective instrument to share the burden effectively in the long-term.

Solidarity criteria* and relocation scheme

According to the respondents, the most effective criteria upon which the equal sharing of responsibility should be based are the amount of GDP per capita (51,6%) and the number of refugees out of the total population (32,2%). These criteria are consistent with the current relocation scheme. In addition, it has been proposed to take into account the size of the state territory and the population density. Finally, the number of refugees that is currently involved in the relocation scheme as decided by two Council decisions (160.000) has been defined “inadequate” with respect to the actual situation by the 61,2% of those surveyed.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

SOLIDARITY AND INTERNAL COOPERATION

Dublin regulation

A near majority of respondents agreed on the necessity of updating the Dublin regulation III (93,5%). In fact, the latest version appears to be ineffective and no more consistent with the current state of affairs. Moreover, it does not contribute to the fair and equal sharing of responsibility among Member States because it charges border countries with the burden of reception and registration. Furthermore, it does not take into consideration any faculty of choice for asylum-seekers. As it has been pointed out in the survey results, this shortcoming could contribute to security problems in reception countries, when asylum-seekers decide to flee from first reception centers before being identified in order to reach their preferred county of destination.

EU management of Search and Rescue operations

Even though only Member States are bound to carry out SAR operations according to International Law, the European Union took the lead of those operations in the Mediterranean Sea: the role of these operations is paramount to save lives and recently their budget has been increased threefold. In this framework, the almost totality of the interviewed (**96,7%**) believes that **SAR and sea border patrol operations should continue to be managed, even permanently, at the European level**. Moreover, it is relevant to notice that a slightly smaller majority of respondents (**80,6%**) is also in favor of **delegate SAR obligations directly to the European Union** instead of leaving them on behalf of the single states, even though this might imply a change in the treaties.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

SOLIDARITY AND INTERNAL COOPERATION

Holistic approach and coordination of agencies

Almost 80% of respondents were in favor a holistic approach that takes into account all aspects of the issue, together and in conjunction with one another, represents the most effective way to handle migration. This result is consistent with the opinion shared by almost all the participants that **the work of European Home Affairs directorate, agencies and offices that deal with asylum and migration policies should be more coordinated with those agencies and offices in charge of development aid.** According to the sample, this **coordination should be mandatory and take place on a regular basis (51%)**, even with the definition of an institutionalized hierarchy among the several bodies (38%). Finally, **coordination and harmonization should characterize not only migration but also integration policies of Member States (83%)**.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

3.2 CROSSING THE BORDERS

Tackling human trafficking*

Finding a solution to the problem of illegal smuggling of refugees is one of the priorities of the EU, due to the current situation in Mediterranean countries. According to the survey, almost a third (29,5%) supported the **facilitation of humanitarian visas managed both by UNHCR and each single Member State**; the **development cooperation in third countries** followed with **25%**, while **increasing intelligence operations with the country of departures** received support from only **11,4%** of respondents. Military operations for the **seizure and destruction of the means of transport** used by the smugglers was the least supported suggestion, receiving **only 9.1%**.

Finally, the EU's strategy to increase the enforcement rate of returns is to offer assistance to third countries by building capacity for the management of returns, raising awareness, and providing support for reintegration measures. According to **70%** of respondents, this **strategy is considered ineffective** because "those who escape from a country that does not guarantee safety and welfare will try to come back again despite repatriation."

KEY OBSERVATIONS

CROSSING THE BORDERS

Legal channels to reach the EU

Strengthening legal channels to reach countries of destination would reduce the number of migrant lives lost at sea and the abuses perpetrated by smuggling networks. On this topic, the majority of respondents (74%) agreed to **facilitate the process of obtaining a residence permit for job seekers**. In addition, the majority of the sample (67,7%) agreed that the **introduction of Private Sponsorship** may be another beneficial avenue for job-seekers. This scheme is based on a sponsor acting as a reference for the third party migrant wishing to come to the EU in the eyes of the state, facilitating the residence permit process.

Labour exploitation of irregular migrants

The most effective solution to combat the exploitation of irregular migrant workers would be the **reinforcement of legalization of undeclared work into regular employment (48%)**, according to the sample. It would also be beneficial to **apply the existing European legislation in the field of illegal migrant work (35,5%)**, as well as **stipulate bilateral agreements with countries of origin** to facilitate the admittance of economic migrants (35,5%).

Role of European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

EASO played an “irrelevant” role in managing the current migratory crisis, according to **51,6%** of the sample. Acknowledging the office’s marginal position due in part to underfunding, the Committee on Budget in the EU Parliament has stated out that EASO “will be called upon to play a greater role in asylum management in future.”

KEY OBSERVATIONS

CROSSING THE BORDERS

Recognition of refugee status

According to the European Commission, the EU needs a clear system for the reception of asylum-seekers. Moreover, Member States should adopt common rules regarding the recognition of refugee status.

The majority of the respondents (**87%**) stated that all **Member States should agree to the mutual recognition of refugee status within EU borders** (including freedom of movement and stabilization anywhere in the Union once the refugee status or subsidiary protection has been granted by one member state)

Managing fund refugees' first reception

Considering the number of instances of fraud and mismanagement regarding funding for immigration, respondents stated that **more controls are needed**, especially in contracting and subcontracting procedures, in order to prevent criminal organizations to access funds.

Moreover, as it has been pointed out: “The operations should not be run locally. Reception and initial stages of asylum procedures should be done by mixed European teams (the best would be EASO, directly spending the EU money in the country, not the country itself), especially in the EU countries with rampant organized crime problems.”

KEY OBSERVATIONS

3.3 COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Establishing international reception centers

The survey found a general consensus in favor of establishing international reception centers. More than **80%** of the sample agrees that **existing refugee camps within transit countries will facilitate the process of granting humanitarian protection**. As a respondent recalled, “this procedure has already been implemented (it was for the Vietnamese refugees in 1979, when the international community decided to solve the problem of “boat people”) and it worked.” In addition, such a procedure provides “**services to a vulnerable population and reduces the cost of transportation and time in the processing of the humanitarian protection**. It also creates an additional layer of bureaucracy, but only temporarily until the end of the humanitarian crisis. At that point, all refugee camps and other institutional bodies created to assist the populations should be terminated.

On the other hand, setting up these reception centers creates some concerns, regarding their **acceptance by transit and origin countries**. Besides, as a respondent highlighted, “there is no EU competence to admit refugees to EU territory.”

Main repatriation tools

To increase the return of ineligible migrants to their countries of origin, almost two-thirds majority of the sample (**66%**) considered putting in place **capacity building activities and knowledge transfer actions to the country of origin** to be an effective approach. One quarter of the respondents agreed that it was also important to **better enforce compulsory repatriation decisions**.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Extending the mobility partnerships

The EU currently maintains a form of bilateral agreement called "mobility partnerships" between the EU and partner countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan. These partnerships establish cooperation on migration and development between the EU and the partner country. **A large majority of the sample argues the importance of extending the mobility partnership.** Not surprisingly, respondents put Turkey as the first additional country to involve, followed by the non-EU countries near the Mediterranean area.

Mandatory resettlement for EU Member States

Participation in the resettlement program for third country refugees should be mandatory for Member States. The sample clearly indicates that only if Member States are forced to participate to the resettlement program they will take part in it. The program should be incremental and flexible rather than constant.

Cooperative programs with country of origin*

The EU is the biggest donor on the global stage and believes migration is a driver for development, even for the countries of destination. There is clearly a division between countries of origin versus transit in the amount of resources allocated and defined priorities. According to the respondents, **cooperative programs with third countries of origin** should focus on:

1. **Strengthening education system (58%);**
 2. **Fighting poverty (45%);**
 3. **Building peace and democracy (35,5%).**
-

KEY OBSERVATIONS

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Cooperative programs with transit country*

Cooperative programs with transit countries should be based more on migration-related issues rather than development policies, as opposed to the programs with origin countries. In fact, according to the sample, the main three aspects upon which the EU should focus are:

1. **Improving reception facilities (58%);**
 2. **Training medical and paramedical staff (35,5%);**
 3. **Promoting information sharing between transit countries, international organizations and the EU (29%).**
-

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

4.1 SOLIDARITY AND INTERNAL COOPERATION

Strengthening solidarity

- Provide support directly to border Member States that are more affected by the migration crisis through:
 1. Highly monitored economic transfers;
 2. Qualified personal support to handle asylum seekers at initial reception.
 - Ensure indirect long-term support by establishing a common European border management process.
-

Updating Dublin Regulation System

- Develop a more effective system that shares the burden of reception and registration of asylum seekers among all Member States.
 - Increase the consideration of asylum seeker's preferences in assigning the country to examine the asylum application.
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Widening the relocation program criteria

- Increase the number of refugees that can be relocated within the program.
 - Consider population density and the size of country's territory among the relocation criteria.
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

SOLIDARITY AND INTERNAL COOPERATION

Search and Rescue

- Place current and future search and rescue operations carried out by Member States under permanent EU management.
-

Strengthening coordination between EU agencies

- Develop a mandatory regular coordination between EU DGs and agencies dealing with asylum and migration policies and those in charge of development aid, through perhaps the creation of an institutionalized hierarchy.
-

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

4.2 CROSSING THE BORDERS

Tackling human trafficking

- Promote the joint UNHCR and Member State management of humanitarian visas process.
 - Enhance the Development Cooperation with third countries.
 - Support the increase of intelligence operations with countries of departure.
-

Developing safe and legal avenues

- Encourage the facilitation of a residence permit for job-seekers.
 - Call for the introduction of a private sponsorship program into Member States' legislation.
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Reducing the Exploitation of Migrant Work

- Promote the legalization of undeclared work into regular employment.
 - Encourage the implementation of existing European legislation in the field of illegal migrant work.
 - Support the stipulation of bilateral agreements with countries of origin to facilitate the admittance of economic migrants.
-

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

CROSSING THE BORDERS

Strengthening the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

- Enhance the EASO's role and mandate, thus enabling it to directly take over some of the asylum procedures, specifically those involving EU funds.
 - Promote the establishment of a European Refugee status.
 - Develop a permanent and binding refugee distribution system.
-

Recognizing refugee status in each Member State

- Call for Member States to mutually recognize the refugee status and asylum decisions, in order to ensure refugees the freedom of movement within the EU territory.
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Improving fund management

- Ensure severe controls on contracting and subcontracting procedures in order to avoid fraud and mismanagement of funds.
 - Support the involvement of mixed European teams in reception activities and during the first phases of asylum procedures.
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

4.3 COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Establishing international reception centers

- Establish international reception centers or special EU departments inside existing refugee camps within transit countries to facilitate the process of granting humanitarian protection.
-

Improving cooperation strategy with third countries to facilitate the return of ineligible migrants

- Design and implement capacity building activities and knowledge transfers to the country of origin.
 - Improve the enforcement of compulsory repatriation decisions.
-

Enlarging mobility partnership agreements

- Extend mobility partnerships to those countries involved in migration issues, especially Turkey and the Mediterranean countries.
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Improving the resettlement program

- Call for the mandatory participation of all Member States to the EU resettlement program.
 - Develop a flexible resettlement program that takes into account the changing circumstances, especially the growing number of refugees seeking international protection.
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Developing cooperative programs with countries of origin

- Support cooperative programs with third countries of origin specifically focused on education, fighting poverty and promoting peace and democracy.
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Developing cooperative programs with transit countries

- Encourage cooperative programs with transit countries to improve reception facilities and train medical and paramedical staff.
 - Promote information sharing among transit countries, international organizations and the EU.
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ABOUT ECEPAA

The European Centre for Economic and Policy Analysis and Affairs (ECEPAA) is a non-profit organization specialized in the development of European Union projects in the field of research, education, youth, culture and social inclusion.

Founded in Brussels in 2011, ECEPAA implements projects in the aforementioned fields as well as carries out policy-oriented research while developing also assistance projects at local, national and international level.

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