

Non-Paper

Common external migration policy

The current refugee crisis is putting the European Union and all of its member states to a historic test. Over the past weeks, this crisis has become even more dramatic.

We will only be able to cope with the crisis if we formulate a determined and ambitious political response based on the principles of solidarity, humanity and responsibility. Given the dimensions of this challenge, our approach must be comprehensive and geared towards an integrated European refugee and asylum policy based on fair burden-sharing across the European Union. At the same time, our approach must systematically address the key root causes of displacement and migration in the countries of origin and transit. In fighting these root causes, we should focus on

- the most relevant regions of origin and transit – in 2014, more than 70% of asylum applications in the EU were related to Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Africa and the Western Balkans
- the key causes of migration, ranging from military conflict and political persecution to poverty
- and those areas where our external action instruments are most effective.

We therefore propose the following measures:

I. A comprehensive and differentiated external migration policy

Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan

The suffering of the people in Syria must end. Therefore, we call, as a priority, for an inclusive political process in Syria to finally resolve the conflict.

As a consequence of the conflict, there are currently more than 3 million Syrian refugees in the region. It is of crucial importance that these refugees find humane living conditions in their host countries. The EU should therefore enhance its efforts to support the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt, which carry a heavy burden. In concrete terms, the following measures should be a priority:

- provide additional funding for meeting refugees' basic needs and giving them access to education and information in the host countries. The EU Trust Fund for Syria is an important instrument in this respect. Furthermore, the EU should mobilise reserves from the Instrument for Peace and Stability and other external financial instruments. Credit lines and financial support from the EBRD should also be used.

- launch a substantial project for schooling and professional education for refugees in the region. Access to employment and means of earning a living will become increasingly important the longer refugees stay in a host country.
- EU member states should put an end to the significant underfinancing of UN organisations and missions that are operating in the region.

The creation of a safe environment in (post-)conflict regions, as well as capacity-building for state structures, is crucial in the fight against the root causes of migration. Where such stabilisation efforts are possible in certain regions of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, we need to act now:

- The Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF), which is an example of a bilateral stabilisation instrument, should receive additional funding and be used to enhance the support of the population in Syria via projects aimed at reconstructing basic infrastructure and ensuring food security.
- The existing instruments aimed at stabilising the territories liberated from ISIS in Iraq should also be allocated sufficient funding.
- The E2I initiative should play a further role in strengthening the Iraqi security forces and thus in creating a safe environment as a prerequisite for effective reconstruction.
- The EU should continue and increase its substantial commitment to the stabilisation and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Libya

Due to the absence of state structures and control, Libya has become a major transit country for refugees from sub-Saharan Africa. Europe must gear up the UN-led endeavours to achieve peace in Libya through the establishment of a government of national unity in order to preserve an effective partner in the medium term as regards cooperation in controlling flows of migrants. Once a government of national unity has been set up in Libya, our most pressing task will be to support and advise it swiftly and effectively in order to guarantee an immediate peace dividend for the population:

- In terms of prudent planning, the EU should now examine options for supporting a future government of national unity in setting up a reliable and inclusive national security structure.
- Stabilisation efforts in Libya will also require substantive support with regard to the establishment of professional administrative structures on a central and local level, in particular as regards effective border control.
- The EU should further strengthen its support to Tunisia in managing its borders with Libya.

East and West Africa

In the Sahel region, we need to further our cooperation in the fight against terrorism and violence, in particular with Mali, the Niger and Nigeria, while maintaining human

rights standards, and to prevent states from eroding. This includes strong support for good governance in the Sahel region.

- We should adopt additional measures to improve integrated border management in the region.
- We call upon the EEAS to review the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission and to examine the extension of its mandate to prevent irregular migration flows. We welcome the deployment of members of the EUCAP Sahel Niger mission to the migratory intersection in Agadez.
- At the same time, we must work with the relevant countries of origin to tackle the causes of economic migration and offer economic opportunities and alternative sources of revenues, especially in the marginalised areas where the majority of migrants come from.

Our activities in the Horn of Africa must focus on fostering regional cooperation within the framework of the Khartoum Process launched under Italy's Presidency and on protecting refugees in cooperation with the transit countries along the migration routes. Sudan is an important partner country in this context. Our work should include:

- continuing support for the stabilisation process in Somalia
- carefully measured dialogue with Eritrea to improve the human rights situation on the ground
- and improvement of the human rights situation and economic prospects in all of the countries of origin of the region

With regard to all relevant countries in East and West Africa – those party to the Khartoum and Rabat Processes – we must establish closer cooperation on irregular migration. In this regard, the possibility of further assistance should be offered, especially to those countries that have improved their readmission policies (in the case of economic migrants' countries of origin). Promoting the willingness to return must be an element of the overall package of measures with the countries in the region.

Priority should also be given to the implementation of measures aimed at improving the capacities of key transit countries in East and West Africa with regard to migration control and management, in close cooperation with UN agencies and other relevant international organisations.

The Valletta Summit will be the venue for raising these issues with our key African partners. The summit must produce tangible deliverables to be quickly implemented on the ground, preferably via binding mutual agreements with the African partners:

- These agreements should contain clear undertakings by the countries of origin with regard to readmission, as well as the fight against the smuggling of migrants.
- On the other hand, EU member states need to honour the efforts of our African partners. In dialogues on migration policy, we should explore which

economic and political measures are needed in order to improve local conditions, thus promoting African ownership.

- The aim must be to develop joint country-specific action plans on how we can tackle the root causes of migration and establish a fair migration system, including greater possibilities for legal migration. These action plans must be adequately funded.

Dedicated migration experts should be deployed to EU delegations and member states' embassies in relevant African countries in order to facilitate the development of tailor-made support packages ranging from development cooperation, support on the stabilisation of state structures, the security sector and rule of law, cooperation on border management, educational programmes, legal migration, to, in return, cooperation on readmission policies and the fight against the smuggling of migrants.

Western Balkans

A huge percentage of the asylum seekers in Europe who are not ultimately granted asylum currently originates from the Western Balkans. Further reinforcing communication and information is one of the key tasks here. Along with local governments, we must communicate even more clearly that an application for asylum from the Western Balkans does not open the path to permanent residence in an EU member state. It is up to the member states to make this credible through an effective return policy. We look forward to the presentation of the announced action plan on return policies by the Commission. Furthermore, we need to agree on which countries we regard as safe countries of origin. In our view, all countries of the Western Balkans should be part of an EU-wide list of safe countries of origin. The enlargement process should focus to a greater extent, in the framework of the new approach to the rule of law, on ways to improve candidate countries' capacity to tackle these challenges.

Most importantly, however, we must continue our already substantial support to the countries of the Western Balkans in creating prospects for growth and jobs in their countries by stimulating economic development.

We must also urgently support the countries of the Western Balkans in overcoming the humanitarian crises they face as transit countries for refugees in need of protection from conflict regions such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. We regard the humane treatment of refugees as the greatest priority. In this context, we should support the countries of the Western Balkans with greater and prompt humanitarian assistance and police and judicial cooperation with EU member states and EU agencies. We support the convening of a High Level Conference to discuss the current developments in the region, bearing in mind that Turkey could play an important role in a positive outcome of the conference.

II. Integrating European refugee and asylum policy

The current challenges show clearly that we need to integrate European asylum policy in the EU, as well as a common return policy, in a new and ambitious way.

Europe must protect refugees in need of protection in a humane way – regardless of which EU country they arrive in. No flow of refugees justifies the catastrophic humanitarian conditions that we have seen in recent weeks. This is why we need harmonised procedures, institutions and shared standards in Europe. Considering the shortcomings of the current European asylum system in the situation of the exceptional inflow we face, we should start a reflection on a pertinent response with a view to achieve a fair distribution of refugees in Europe. A more efficient asylum system for persons in need of international protection goes hand in hand with a more efficient repatriation policy of irregular migrants at the EU level, with the aim of granting refugee status rapidly and efficiently to those who are genuinely in need of international protection.

This is also why we need faster procedures and decisions. We need to agree on which countries we regard as safe countries of origin. The first step should be for the member states to agree urgently on this matter before we continue the procedure at European level.

Furthermore, EU member states should show greater solidarity and provide immediate assistance to the EU countries that are currently under particular strain. The EU and its member states must become more efficient in this area and offer the initial reception countries practical and financial support without delay.

Finally, we should not shy away from using the possibilities offered by the European treaties to create an integrated border management system at our external borders.