

Invitation letter by President Donald Tusk to the members of the European Council

The crisis we are all witnessing is a test of our humanity and responsibility. It causes many tensions and accusations among politicians and people in Europe. I have no illusions that Europe will need to deal with this challenge for many years to come. Therefore I would like us to focus on the overall approach to this crisis.

Our response will not obscure the brutal reality however. We as Europeans are currently not able to manage our common external borders, hence some States decided to protect themselves by closing their national ones. The protection of the European community is our first duty and obligation and we have failed on this front. For too long our discussions have centred around shifting the responsibility onto others. There is a long list of issues where we could blame one another but it will not help us in finding a common solution. Today we must absolutely work out policies that we can implement in order to help each other. That is why I will ask all of us to honestly discuss what the EU can do to help its Member States in solving this problem. We will also need to discuss our responsibilities at a national level. No one should shy away from them because then we will be unable to build our joint European response based on unity and solidarity. Shifting the responsibility and putting the blame on one another must definitely come to an end.

There are different experiences and perceptions within the EU and there are no easy solutions. Still it cannot be an excuse not to develop a comprehensive strategy or to build a sound migration policy that is effective and responsible while respecting our core values. The current 'migration policy' is a sum of despair of the victims fleeing war and persecution, of their determination in searching for a better life, of the cynicism of the smugglers, and too often, of the refugees and migrants' tragic fate. Therefore it is essential to establish a credible European migration policy.

Besides discussing our overall approach to the crisis I want to address issues such as: help to the frontline Member States; cooperation with the Western Balkan countries, with Turkey and the countries bordering Syria; budgetary assistance to the High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme; and the implementation of our conclusions on return and readmission. We must also discuss diplomatic efforts in solving the Syria crisis. I will share with you my assessment of the situation after my visits in the countries of the Mediterranean region and the Middle East.

There is however one issue which cannot wait. The World Food Programme needs money to provide food to 11 million people in Syria and in the region. The WFP has already cut substantially food support to refugees. I would like to appeal to all of you not to wait until our meeting and provide donations to the World Food Programme, in coordination with the ECHO.

I hope we will be able to address all these challenges at our special meeting next Wednesday at 6pm. The President of the European Parliament will join us in the beginning of the meeting. After the exchange with President Schulz we will discuss the above-mentioned issues over dinner.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Brussels.

D. TUSK