

EUROPEAN UNION



**Committee of the Regions**

**RESOL-VI/003**

**113th plenary session, 8-9 July 2015**

**RESOLUTION  
for a  
SUSTAINABLE EU APPROACH TO MIGRATION**

## **THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,**

1. expresses its deep sorrow at the deaths in recent months of thousands of migrants trying to enter the European Union and therefore welcomes the debate on a new European Agenda on Migration and strongly argues that this issue concerns and must involve all the countries belonging to the European Union, and must constitute a responsibility for the entire European Union;
2. believes that the EU's approach to migration must be sustainable in the long term, solidarity based and respect human rights. It must take account of all aspects of migration, which include humanitarian obligations, asylum seekers, economic migrants; emphasises the importance of tackling smuggling and human trafficking, development and stability in non-EU countries, effective returns policy, and Europe's demographic challenges. The Committee underlines that regular migration can be an essential element of development. In addition to the benefits that successful immigration policy brings for the individuals concerned, it also provides significant benefits for society in general by contributing to the workforce and to the financing of welfare. The Committee therefore calls on all those holding political responsibility, the European institutions, national, regional and local authorities, the media and civil society not to stigmatise migrants or migration and to provide citizens with objective information on migration and its causes and effects; the Committee rejects all forms of discrimination and racist behaviour towards migrants as incompatible with the founding principles of the European Union. In this context, takes note of the results of the June 25-26 European Council meeting and calls on the European Commission and the Member States to work within the context of the agreement reached to address the migration emergency effectively, involving local and regional authorities;
3. considers that the existing tools and channels for the policy dialogue between the EU, the Member States and civil society organisations do work, but notes that the policy dialogue between the local/regional authorities and the European level is fragmented or occurs on an ad hoc basis. The Committee therefore suggests actively involving and using the experience of local and regional authorities to improve standards with regard to reception conditions and asylum procedures, and that training and assistance with networking be provided for reception authorities. The local and regional authorities in the Member States responsible for the reception of refugees often do not have sufficient resources for performing this task. Moreover, the number of asylum applications is increasing steadily. In this regard, the Committee considers it a priority to boost the capacities of local and regional authorities to identify and protect vulnerable groups, in particular unaccompanied minors, who are frequently exploited by criminal gangs for the purposes of sexual slavery, forced labour, or even organ trafficking. Asylum procedures must also be shortened and negative decisions implemented faster and more efficiently, as not only the dialogue between the political levels but also citizens' confidence in the European and national asylum systems must be further strengthened;

4. welcomes the Commission's commitment to make proposals for a revision of the so-called Dublin regulation, which has clearly proven impracticable; calls on the Commission to start the debate on these proposals as soon as possible, ensuring that they move the focus away from coercion towards more sustainable ways of distributing responsibility between Member States while respecting migrants fundamental rights;
5. strongly encourages the improvement of intelligence gathering in order to enable a proactive and preventive approach to avoid loss of human life, including cooperation between EU and national intelligence agencies and with maritime intelligence companies;
6. emphasises that relocation and resettlement policies should involve all the European countries through the quota system and take into account geographical and demographical criteria, the size of a region or Member State, the population, the economic situation, the labour market needs and the available infrastructure and services, as well as other relevant factors such as family reunification. The Committee therefore welcomes the specification of such criteria for European relocation and resettlement schemes in the European Agenda on Migration in order to move towards a more sustainable policy response. Notes that the European Commission has finally invoked the emergency clause (Art 78.3 TFEU) which seems fully justified under the present circumstances; underlines, however, that further measures should be adopted with full involvement of the European Parliament to ensure their transparency and legitimacy;
7. points out that the uneven distribution of asylum-seekers and refugees among States and between and within regions is a major challenge for local and regional authorities, as is the lack of forward planning and the inability to prepare for reception sufficiently in advance. Improvised solutions make it harder to ensure that the integration process is swift and successful. Local and regional authorities must be guaranteed resources at state and EU level so that they can provide sustainable reception of asylum-seekers and refugees in the long term and can manage the unpredictable variations that the reception of asylum-seekers and refugees inevitably entails. The Committee urges all Member States to implement the principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, as contained in Art 80 TFEU and to cooperate with local and regional authorities in the implementation and operation of both the emergency relocation mechanism and the proposals for a redistribution mechanism made at the end of May; looks forward to further proposals for a mandatory and automatically-triggered relocation system;
8. believes that one crucial aspect that will facilitate agreement in Europe is the level of public confidence in our ability to successfully prevent further loss of life, disrupt trafficking networks and integrate refugees seeking genuine protection. The Committee therefore calls on the European Commission to engage with the European Committee of the Regions as a matter of urgency, in order to identify successful integration policies, raise awareness about them and facilitate their adoption throughout Europe. The Committee calls on the European Commission to remind Member States and local and regional authorities of the role that European Structural and Investment Funds can play in supporting integration policies;

9. points out that the local and regional authorities are in the front line but are not equipped with sufficient resources. They often bear the human, financial and technical burden of saving human life, and provide support for the economic and social integration of migrants. In practice, they are obliged to manage, with their own resources, a migration crisis that affects all of Europe, not only the Mediterranean. Greater support is urged for the regions hosting most migrants, so they can be received under decent conditions;
10. strongly argues that greater attention should be given to the security aspect by stepping up checks on migrants so as to help combat incentives to irregular immigration and the possible entry of criminals, protecting and distinguishing those identified as refugees escaping from real humanitarian emergencies from simple irregular migrants;
11. welcomes the budget increase for the EU's Triton and Poseidon operations and the commitment from fifteen Member States to provide additional resources, which should enable the EU to react to emergencies more effectively, and underlines the need to adapt the geographical scope of both operations to the problems at hand. The Committee highlights the need for all Member States to assume their responsibilities, and calls for a mechanism that will provide for a further increase in this budget, in line with the changing requirements for effective rescue operations for as long as they are needed. It also emphasises that funds and resources should be released as swiftly as possible without being delayed by unnecessary bureaucratic procedures; encourages the Commission to produce swiftly the proposals for a review of the mandate of FRONTEX in order to give it a sound legal basis to carry out search and rescue operations;
12. suggests that in the near future, EU-LISA, the Agency for Large Scale IT Systems, develop a comprehensive data-sharing system on the subject of migration and local authorities, based on the VIS system while safeguarding the protection of personal data. Such a system could be very helpful in sharing expertise and pooling experience in terms of managing accommodation, processing the claims of asylum-seekers and refugees, developing integration policies and tackling irregular migration. It would also offer practical solutions for promoting cooperation in this area between national, local and regional authorities;
13. believes that the EU's response to the challenges and opportunities of migration will be incomplete if the economic and especially the political situations in the countries of origin are dealt with in isolation. The Committee therefore welcomes the European Commission recommendation to engage with third countries and reach agreements in order to manage migration and to strengthen their capacity to intervene and save the lives of migrants in distress. The Committee suggests that this engagement should also be pursued at the sub-national level, also involving law enforcement authorities, to achieve tangible results on the ground in the fight against smuggling networks, and in establishing legal migration paths and implementing return policies. Calls for the EU, Member States, and Local and Regional authorities to intensify efforts to help develop the capacity of third countries to function in the

global economy, in particular via trade, and the development of local entrepreneurship; in this context, calls on the Member States to honour their commitment to dedicate at least 0.7% of their GNI to development cooperation and support in particular decentralised development cooperation;

14. notes that cooperation with stable governments in North Africa reduces departures from their coasts and hence the risk of deaths at sea. It is necessary, not to say crucial, for the EU to earmark further funds for the governments of the Member States with Mediterranean coasts, so that they can work with the relevant countries of North Africa, on (i) maritime rescue; (ii) the establishment of areas equipped for reception, if necessary, on the North African coast; (iii) modernisation of control instruments to reduce the number of departures and the ensuing risk of deaths at sea;
15. reiterates its call for "migration and integration partnerships" to be set up between cities and regions in the countries of origin and destination in order to enhance cooperation and mutual trust. These partnerships would include preparatory measures (such as language lessons and cultural and civic training), individual immigration projects, including workers' training programmes, and setting up programmes for circular migration, voluntary return and the reintegration of migrants. These partnerships will complement the work of the European migration liaison officers seconded to EU delegations in key non-EU countries;
16. considers that the creation of channels and opportunities for non-EU nationals to come to Europe to work or study should play a central role in the development of future migration policies. The Committee underlines that it is consequently essential to develop deeper cooperation with other countries concerned, and to provide information campaigns with local media in those countries on the opportunities for legal migration to Europe, the significant dangers linked to irregular migration, and the EU's return policy;
17. reiterates the importance of addressing the root causes of the current irregular flow of people into Europe and therefore the importance of developing local democracy and economies in non-EU countries as a key aspect of their political stability, and calls on the European Commission and the Member States to further develop the existing cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions and Europe's local and regional authorities in order to help build local administration capacity in those countries. The Committee therefore draws attention to the role played by the CoR's Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), as well as by the Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR); underlines that ARLEM and CORLEAP can be used as platforms to help engage in a local and regional dialogue on how to prevent human trafficking, human smuggling and criminal groups as well as being used as platforms for encouraging good governance, stability and peace;

18. instructs its president to forward this resolution to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission and the president of the European Council.

Brussels, 8 July 2015

The President  
of the  
European Committee of the Regions

Markku Markkula

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