



# EU Asylum Policy: Going beyond President Juncker's proposal

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## **Human Rights at the core of the Common European Asylum Policy**

- The harmonisation and acceleration of asylum decision processes is a matter of urgency. However, there are dangers of setting up a Safe Countries of Origin list, which might undermine the integrity of the asylum procedure.
- The introduction of a European Humanitarian Visa would contribute to safer entries. There is a need for establishing legal channels for refugees to come to Europe, as close to the conflict region as possible.
- More refugees will come, and European leaders need to be prepared to go beyond this first step, very soon. Secondly, President Juncker’s proposal that the quota system must be a permanent mechanism is obvious.
- The EU and its Member States should engage in its neighbourhood by enhancing international solidarity with countries of conflict and first arrival of refugees. Commitment and solidarity with host countries in the region must be strengthened through ambitious EU resettlement programmes, based on the same quota mechanism as established for the future EU relocation policy.

## **Assuming national responsibilities**

- The emergency relocation system is needed but the relocation of 160,000 people from Greece, Italy and Hungary to other EU Member States is not a matter of solidarity but a matter of legal and moral duty.
- Also the UK, Ireland and Denmark, who are not legally committed to the EU migration and asylum policy, have to contribute their fair share to mitigating the migration and refugee crisis. The same goes for other associated states, notably Switzerland, Norway and Iceland.

## **Ensuring safe arrivals**

- Progress is seen in stabilising the Central Mediterranean refugee pathway, but the situation remains intolerable, and the EU needs to replace operations with a sustained permanent policy that ensures EU interventions in the long run. Hence the urgency is clear to set up a European Border and Coast Guard system, with a strong humanitarian dimension and with utmost respect for human rights.

- The EC should also be encouraged to establish a reporting mechanism on the implementation of the Search and Rescue obligations of all Mediterranean countries, including the EU Member States concerned.

### **Inclusive Welcome**

- The better involvement of civil society organisations in delivering services does not mean that the state can abandon its duty to protect. However Member States should be encouraged to consider the setting up or reinforcement, as appropriate, of volunteer services to support smooth and dignified asylum determination procedures.
- Civil society should be encouraged to engage with its communities and regional authorities to establish platforms for the operation, coordination and implementation of civil society activities.
- Local authorities and local civil society organisations are in the frontline of the integration process. All EU Member States need to prepare systematically for welcoming high numbers of asylum seekers. Capacities will have to be expanded to move from crisis management to swift and sustainable policy implementation.

### **Stronger international role for the EU**

- The EU must go beyond voluntary contributions in order to engage swiftly at the international level when it is imperative to do so. National protection mechanisms in our neighbouring countries must be strengthened, including through more EU development and humanitarian assistance, redirected to this task. This includes close cooperation with EASO and UNHCR on the setting up and strengthening of national asylum determination procedures.
- As concerns other actors, the EU and its Member States are encouraged to act jointly in international fora such as the UN to broaden solidarity with the victims of the Syrian conflict, including by mobilising the support of other nations, such as the US, Canada or the Gulf states.
- A European diplomatic offensive is necessary to address the crises in Syria and Libya. This is long overdue. It is only by addressing the root causes of instability that the EU will be able to prosper in stability and peace. We need to share with our neighbours, and work with all relevant regional and global actors towards lasting solutions.

*We would like to thank Sönke Schmidt, FEPS Senior Advisor on Migration and Asylum for his meaningful and excellent contribution to this policy brief.*