



POLICY POSITION

Towards a More Effective and Humane European Migration and Asylum Policy

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- A comprehensive and harmonised approach to migration and asylum in the EU should be prioritised, including revising and agreeing on the European Commission's 2020 Pact on Migration and Asylum by the end of the legislative mandate in 2024;
- Implement mandatory burden-sharing mechanisms and adequate resources to ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities among Member States;
- Migrants can contribute to economic growth and increased competitiveness by filling labour market gaps, paying taxes, and initiating new businesses;
- Support civil society in its crucial role in supporting migrants, facilitating integration, and highlighting policy shortcomings;
- Involve migrants and asylum seekers in the decision-making process to ensure that their voices are heard and their perspectives considered;
- Ensure that Frontex operates within the framework of EU values and human rights with strengthened accountability and that its work is scrutinised by the European Parliament and other key stakeholders, civil society and the public;
- Reject proposals and policies relying on fences or walls while promoting the integration of migrants for social cohesion and reducing fear and prejudice;
- Establish a comprehensive policy for the Mediterranean region and beyond through intensified cooperation with third countries, such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM);
- Improve existing mechanisms and establish new ones to further support Member States, including funding, equipment, personnel, and expertise from organisations like EASO and IOM;
- Provide specialised training to border guards and frontline staff especially on identifying and assisting vulnerable groups;
- Establish dedicated reception facilities and provide comprehensive training on gender and child protection to address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of these groups.



INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Syrian civil war, the war in Ukraine, and the tragic disasters at sea are only a few examples of cruelties that have collectively highlighted the need for the European Union (EU) to agree on a solid, long-term migration and asylum policy. The protracted Syrian civil war, characterised by violence and displacement, has driven millions of Syrians to embark on perilous journeys in search of refuge in European countries. Additionally, the war in Ukraine has forced many Ukrainians to flee their homes, seeking protection and opportunities elsewhere within Europe. Tragically, the disasters at sea, particularly in the Mediterranean, have claimed numerous lives as individuals fleeing war, conflict and violence risk dangerous sea crossings in their pursuit of safety and a better future. These converging factors have presented challenges for the EU, demanding comprehensive responses that prioritise the protection of human rights and dignity, coordinated efforts to address the root causes, and making sure everyone who needs help and protection will receive it.

IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The core of any policy should be that refugees and asylum seekers are, first and foremost, human beings and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Any European approach to reduce arrivals to the EU must therefore never be at the expense of ensuring access to protection for those in need. The migrant flows occurring in recent years must not in any way legitimise an erosion of fundamental rights and humanitarian standards – especially not in view of the persistent anti-immigrant populism in the EU and beyond. Respect to the rule of law and access to legal asylum procedures must be available for all.

There is therefore an urgent need for a comprehensive and harmonised approach to migration and asylum policy in the EU. The EU needs to reach a swift agreement on a revised, human-centred European Commission's 2020 Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Council of the EU reached an agreement on only two out of the eight key proposals during the meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 9

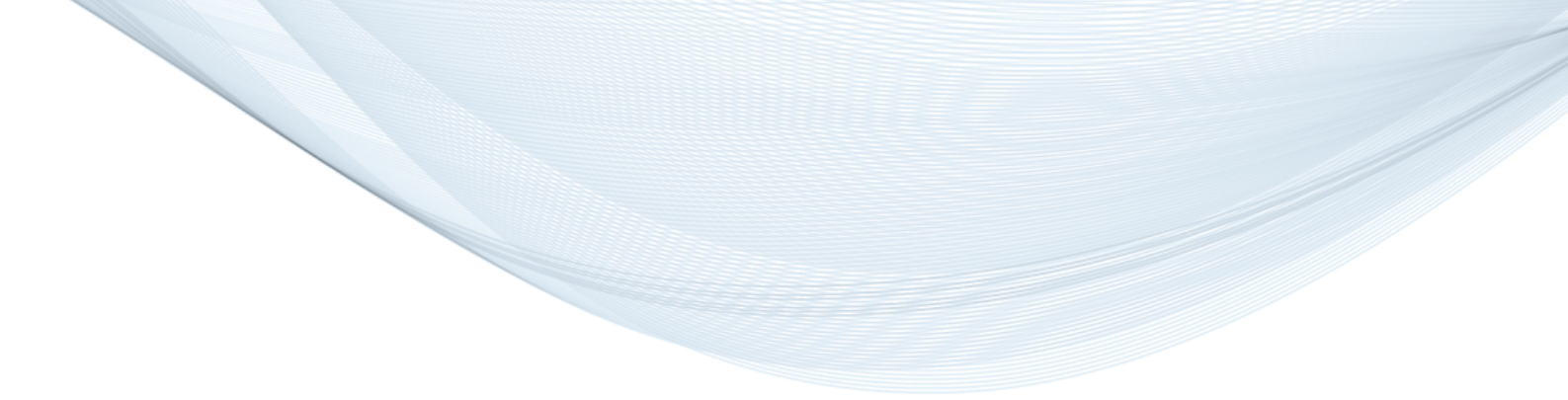


June 2023 – namely the asylum and migration management regulation (AMMR) and the asylum procedure regulation (APR). The full pact needs to be implemented by the end of the legislative mandate in 2024. Moreover, the EU needs to discourage secondary movements, establish automatic relocation mechanisms and ensure a fairer distribution of responsibilities across the EU. To achieve this, it is crucial to amend and reformulate the Dublin Regulation, which currently holds Member States responsible for migrants arriving at their borders. This outdated approach has created a stalemate in the reform process and is causing disharmony within the EU. Instead, a phased-out approach should be adopted, emphasising fair responsibility-sharing among Member States based on their capacity to integrate migrants and refugees.

The current Commission's proposal relies on voluntary contributions from Member States rather than implementing mandatory burden-sharing mechanisms. This approach fails to ensure a fair distribution of asylum seekers and refugees. It is essential to establish a clear mechanism for solidarity and responsibility-sharing among Member States to prevent

burden-shifting and promote a more equitable distribution of responsibilities. Additionally, the proposal does not provide adequate resources to Member States to effectively process asylum requests and meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. To address this, it should allocate sufficient resources to Member States enabling them to process claims efficiently and provide necessary support to those in need.

To further enhance the proposal, further measures should be considered. Greater support should be provided to frontline Member States and third countries that host a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers. By offering assistance and resources, the EU can alleviate the strain on these countries and ensure the wellbeing of those seeking refuge. Moreover, to counter irregular migration and dangerous routes, the EU should prioritise the establishment of safe and legal pathways for migration. By offering safe and legal alternatives, individuals are less likely to resort to dangerous routes that claim thousands of lives every year. Lastly, civil society organisations (CSOs) should be involved in the implementation and development of this proposal.



Their active participation and input are essential in ensuring that all the policies and initiatives are effective, inclusive and responsive to the needs of migrants. Finally, the EU should coordinate rescue missions at sea and put an end to the criminalisation of civilian sea rescue missions.

PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS

Migration holds significant potential for various aspects of society, including labour market relief, cultural enrichment and demographic support. The EU's ageing and working population can particularly benefit from immigration as it helps maintain output and positively impacts the dependency ratio. Furthermore, diverse backgrounds and experiences can foster innovation and provide fresh perspectives on policy-making and current challenges. Migrants often possess a strong sense of innovation, problem-solving and entrepreneurship, which are skills very much needed in the EU's labour market.

Additionally, the contribution of migrants extends to economic growth and increased competitiveness. By filling gaps in the labour market, paying taxes and initiating new businesses,

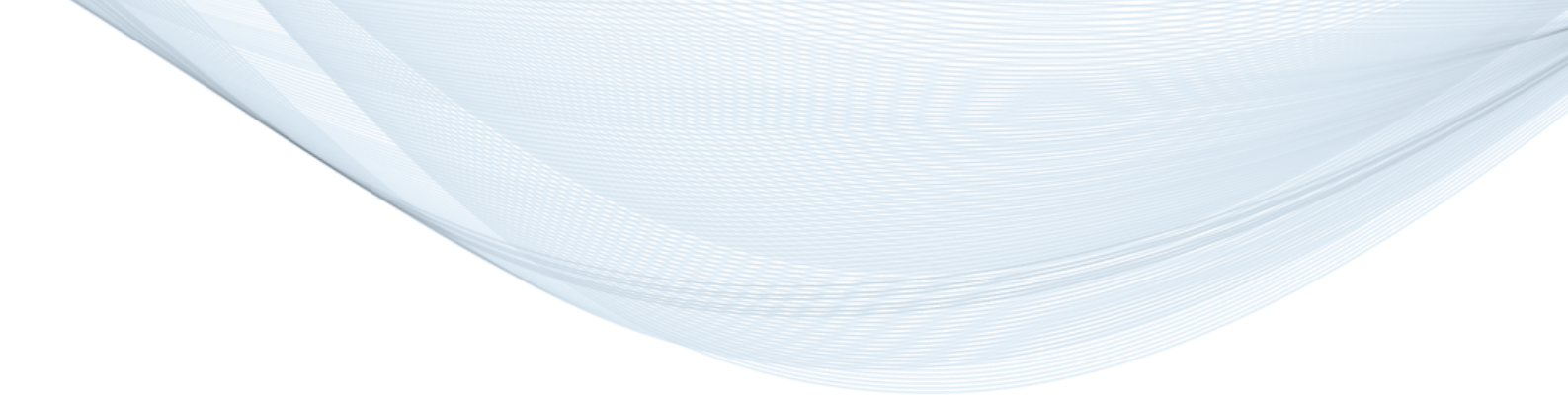
migrants play a vital role in boosting economic development.

To facilitate integration, a number of measures should be implemented. These include ensuring rapid access to training and the labour market, providing educational opportunities and offering language education, simplifying the recognition of qualifications and vocational degrees, and expanding the availability of mother-child integration centres. However, it is important to recognise that societal and cultural integration policies. Therefore, a more harmonised and comprehensive approach is needed.

ENHANCING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society plays a central role in supporting migrants and asylum seekers and promoting their integration as well as highlighting shortcomings in policy-making. The EU should strengthen its Integration Action Plan for the period of 2021-2027. Organised civil society and the European Parliament need to actively scrutinise the implementation of this plan.

Furthermore, involving migrants and



asylum seekers in the decision-making process is essential. This can be achieved by granting them representation in forums such as the European Migration Forum and ensuring greater representation of migrants and ethnic minorities in other EU bodies.

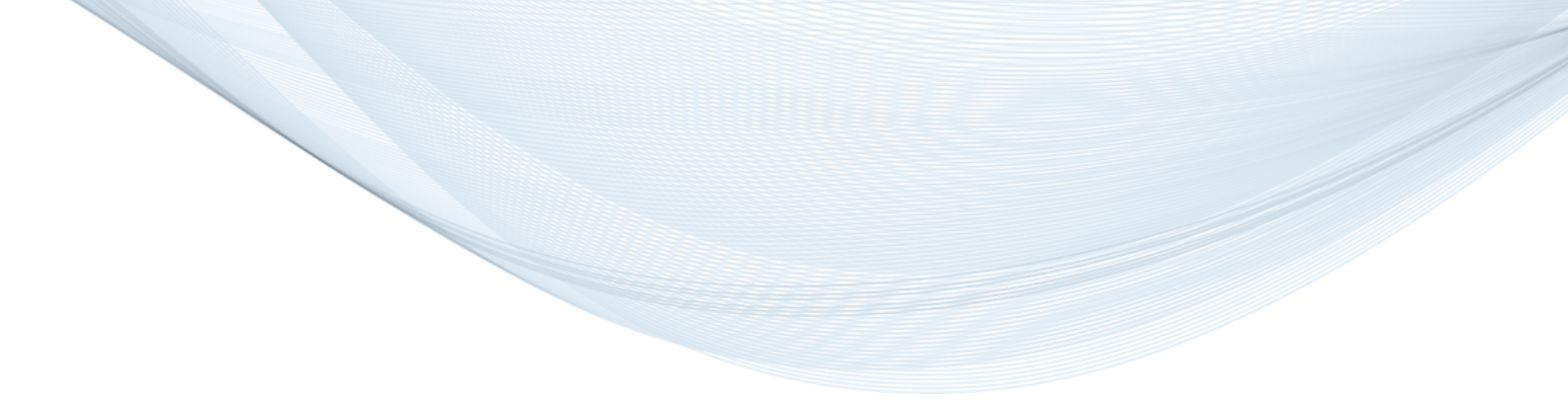
It is crucial to promote diversity and inclusivity in the workforce and hiring processes of institutions, public bodies and civil society organisations. Furthermore, local and regional governments should invest in the inclusion of migrants in policy-making.

The EU should prioritise partnerships with organisations in migrants' countries of origin. This includes collaboration with local CSOs, youth organisations, diaspora organisations, entrepreneurs and business networks. These partnerships can facilitate integration efforts and provide valuable support. In addition, the EU should more actively involve social structures in the development and implementation of contingency plans. Support should be provided to these structures, including to social workers and volunteers who play an indispensable role in assisting migrants.

ENSURING THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The EU should withdraw from the EU-Turkey deal and refrain from using it as a model for future agreements with other countries. The deal fails to respect the principles outlined in the 1951 Geneva Convention, which safeguards the rights of refugees. Instead, the focus should be on offering resettlement programmes for refugees in third countries who are unable to return home, ensuring their safety and wellbeing. Also, increased support should be provided to countries of origin and transit to address the root causes of migration.

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, should operate within the framework of EU values and human rights. This includes respecting the rights of migrants and adhering to established protocols to guarantee their safety and dignity. To enhance the effectiveness and accountability of the agency, it is necessary to strengthen the independence of the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO). This can be achieved by providing increased resources and empowering them to initiate investigations and conduct



audits when necessary. It is imperative that Frontex establish a subcommittee dedicated to monitoring the agency's adherence to human rights standards. This subcommittee would oversee the work of the FRO and ensure that the agency upholds its commitments in full respect of human rights. Independent investigations into any human rights breaches by Frontex should be launched without further delay to ensure transparency and accountability. In order to enhance transparency, the agency should publish reports and data on its operations. This publication of information would allow for greater scrutiny and enable the European Parliament and other key stakeholders, civil society, and the public to assess the agency's performance.

PROMOTING POSITIVE NARRATIVES

Positive narratives should be promoted to celebrate the values of diversity and multiculturalism. These narratives should emphasise that migrants are human beings with unique experiences, expertise, and skills. It is crucial to counter the perception that migrants are inherently vulnerable, recognising that it is the system and prejudice that often

make them such. When addressing migration, it is essential to recognise the multiple dimensions of identity that individuals possess. Elements such as race, gender and socioeconomic status and how these intersect to shape their experiences. Mental health and wellbeing should also be prioritised in migration and asylum policies. Supporting the mental health of migrants and asylum seekers and ensuring their overall wellbeing is crucial for their successful integration and overall quality of life.

It is important to condemn any proposals and policies that rely on fences or walls. Europe should strive to be an open continent. Building walls contradicts the principles of openness, compassion, and inclusivity. A 'Fortress Europe' runs contrary to the founding values of the EU, and the open nature of Europe and Schengen cannot be compromised – no matter what. Additionally, the integration of migrants plays a vital role in reducing fear and prejudice within societies and in promoting social cohesion. Initiatives such as language classes and cultural exchanges can foster understanding, empathy and connection between migrants and the host communities.



FURTHERING COOPERATION FOR A COMMON GLOBAL RESPONSE

The EU should establish a comprehensive policy for the Mediterranean region and beyond, ensuring broad and intensified cooperation with third countries through initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). This collaboration is vital for addressing migration challenges effectively. Contingency plans are essential to prepare for potential crises related to migration and asylum. These plans should encompass strategies for managing reception and processing, while ensuring the availability of adequate resources and infrastructure to support those in need.

To facilitate a rapid and effective response, existing mechanisms should be improved and new ones put in place to enable Member States to receive additional support swiftly. This could include funding, equipment, personnel, and expertise from relevant organisations, such as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

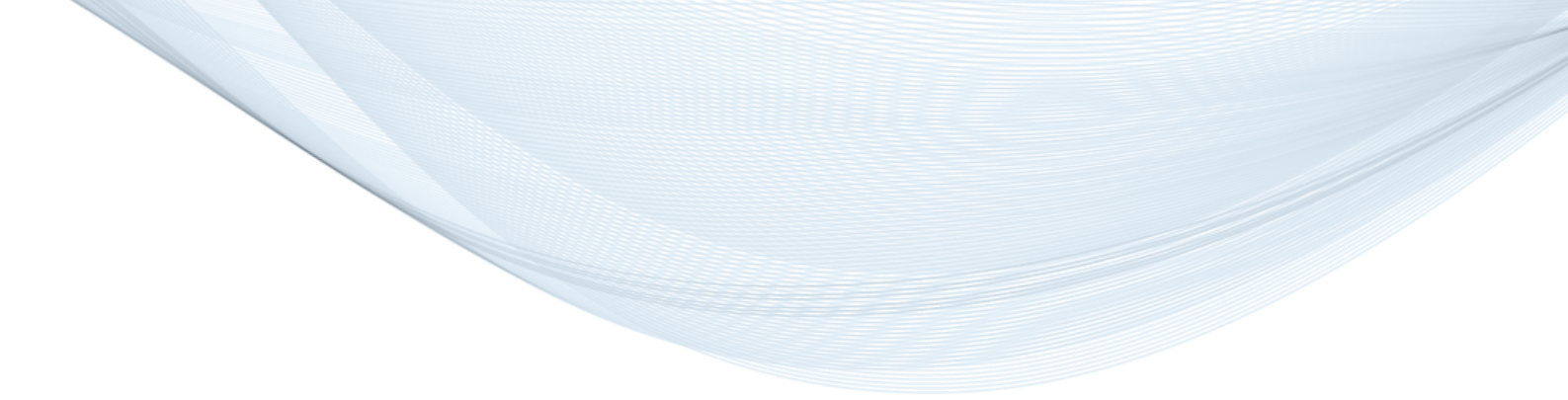
To promote global peace and

The EU should actively strengthen cooperation with international bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and regional authorities such as the African Union (AU).

Conflict, war and violence drive migration. Diplomatic efforts and mediation should be employed to resolve conflicts and support peacebuilding initiatives. The EU should strengthen its capacities in areas such as intelligence and information exchange. Enhancing the global presence of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and fostering a global network with national embassies can facilitate coordination of national policies towards common goals.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PERSONS

Member States should strengthen their legal frameworks to effectively trace and support vulnerable persons such as women, children and unaccompanied minors at every stage of their journey. This approach is crucial to ensure their protection and safeguard their wellbeing. Increased funding should be allocated to CSOs operating within the



EU and in countries of origin and transit. These organisations play a vital role in protecting and advocating for the rights of migrant women and young migrants. This funding would enhance the capacity to provide healthcare, childcare support, education, employment assistance and reskilling and upskilling opportunities.

Border guards should receive training on identifying and assisting vulnerable groups with a particular focus on women and unaccompanied minors. This training would equip them with the necessary skills to handle these situations sensitively and ensure the protection of vulnerable individuals. It is crucial to establish dedicated reception facilities that cater specifically to vulnerable groups. Frontline staff that are involved in migration should receive comprehensive training on gender and child protection, as this empowers them to effectively respond to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of these groups.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Only by working together can we provide common solutions to the challenges Europe faces and ensure that Europeans' ambitions mirror the future work of the European Union. By bringing our member organisations together in our Political Committees, we continuously develop new policy positions and put existing ones to good use. Please visit our website www.europeanmovement.eu to take a look at our main policy positions that guide our current work and get in touch if you would like to join us or support our work.



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