

Resolution on migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa.

The resolution was tabled by the Greens/EFA, EPP, EFD, GUE/NGL, ALDE groups and Cristiana MUSCARDINI (ECR, IT).

It expressed deep sadness at the tragic loss of 300 lives in Lampedusa and was of the opinion that **Lampedusa should be a turning point for Europe**, stating that the only way of preventing another tragedy was to adopt a **coordinated approach based on solidarity and responsibility, with the support of common instruments**. The European Union and the Member States must do more to prevent further loss of life at sea.

Members urged Member States to fulfil their **legal obligation to come to the assistance of migrants at sea** and noted that legal entry into the EU is preferable to a more dangerous irregular entry, which could entail human trafficking risks and loss of life. They stressed that the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers was one of the most concrete forms of solidarity and responsibility-sharing, and pointed to the importance of projects such as the Pilot Project for Intra-EU Relocation from Malta (EUREMA), under which beneficiaries of international protection were being relocated from Malta to other Member States. Parliament advocated developing more initiatives of this kind.

Parliament went on to make the following observations and recommendations:

Responsibility sharing mechanism: Members underlined the importance of responsibility-sharing in the field of asylum, and recommended **creating a mechanism based on objective criteria** to reduce the pressure on those Member States receiving higher numbers of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, in either absolute or proportional terms.

Task force: welcoming the Commission's intention to establish a task force on the issue of migratory flows in the Mediterranean, Members insisted that Parliament should be involved in such a task force at either a political or a technical level. They also welcomed the Commission's proposals to deploy a search-and-rescue operation from Cyprus to Spain.

EASO and FRONTEX: the resolution asked for an increase in the budget for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and for the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States (Frontex) in order to assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders, including situations which involve humanitarian emergencies and rescue at sea. It also asked the Council and the Commission to consider the possibility of establishing an EU coast guard and of setting up another Frontex operational office in areas of migratory pressure, and in particular in the Mediterranean region, with related costs covered by the Member State selected.

Criminal sanctions: Member States were urged to lay down strong criminal sanctions for those individuals who facilitate human trafficking both into and across the EU, and to set up wide-ranging information campaigns to raise awareness of the kinds of risks faced by those who put their lives into the hands of traffickers and smugglers.

Assistance to migrants in distress: calling on the Commission to review Council Directive 2002/90/EC, which defines the sanctions in the event of facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence, Parliament called for clarification that the provision of humanitarian assistance to migrants at sea who were in distress was to be welcomed, and was not an action which should ever lead to any form of sanction. Members wanted the EU and the Member States to amend or review any legislation sanctioning people assisting migrants in distress at sea.

Cooperation between EU and third countries: the resolution stressed the need for better, more efficient cooperation between the EU and third countries to prevent a repetition of such tragic occurrences as those off Lampedusa. Agreements on migration management between the EU and transit countries to the EU must be a priority for the Union, including the funding of police facilities and training in law enforcement capabilities, and assistance for these countries – and migrants’ countries of origin – to diversify and improve their economies. At the same time, Parliament stressed the need for third countries to respect international law with regard to saving lives at sea, and to ensure the protection of refugees and respect for fundamental rights.