

Humane, comprehensive and immediate action for Migration

10 September 2015

Esteemed Ministers,

On the occasion of the Extraordinary Council of 14th September 2015, we, the consortium of LADDER (composed of 46 Local Authorities organisations’ and Civil Society organisations and networks, originating from 35 EU and non-EU countries), **call for immediate, comprehensive, coordinated and a humane response to the migration crisis** currently affecting Europe and the neighbouring area.

Unprecedented numbers of migrants are reaching EU borders. The flow of people fleeing conflict zones and unstable countries, in particular most recently Syria, is constantly increasing and unless immediate action is taken at both European and international level, lives will continue to be lost. The recent crisis has shown that a coordinated EU action can ensure that the needs of people in crisis are met. Hosting countries, transit countries and final destination countries of persons seeking international protection must all work together to find and agree upon common actions.

The EU and Member States need to react strongly, quickly, comprehensively and in union, in order to stop the appalling and unjust deaths of people who must be allowed to access to their fundamental human right to live in safety and dignity. The EU & Member States must ensure the following:

1

I. ACTING: An Immediate Response

Humane treatment of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of Protection

Fundamentally, action must ensure that humane treatment and the respect of fundamental rights and basic life-conditions are paramount at all times including:

- Elementary nutrition, healthcare, safety and hygiene standards, as well as information and legal assistance should be guaranteed in all locations where asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection are, making the necessary funding available for this.
- A coordinated response is needed at EU level, with strong cooperation between EU Member States and non EU countries (including candidate countries) on the migration routes, and involvement of all other actors including local authorities and civil society.
- Attention must be given to the specific needs of unaccompanied children and women.
- Unconditional respect of Human Rights and equal treatment.

Updating & adapting the European asylum mechanism



Current agreements on the registration and distribution of asylum seekers have shown their limitations. EU Member States must act now to develop a common and unified European system on asylum that includes principles of solidarity, collective responsibility, fair and proportional distribution, and respect for human rights of asylum seekers, refugees and other beneficiaries of protection.

Adequate structures for reception and hosting

The European policy must include a joined up and adequate European infrastructure for reception and hosting of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection that upholds basic human rights and basic living standards. This will require:

- Support to those countries where receiving is highest and the process of assessing asylum applications is greatest.
- Investment in adequate structures to be assumed collectively by EU Member States, including structural, financial and technical support for these countries and, in particular, to local authorities dealing with the influx of and providing living conditions to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection, including the most affected local authorities from EU & non-EU countries on the migration routes.
- Those countries, which until now have not had systems in place, must plan ahead and develop adequate responses to pre-empt any unprecedented influx that might occur.

Combat illegal migrant smuggling

Human smuggling is unfortunately still thriving. Focus should be on developing and implementing an effective action plan to combat illegal human smuggling and to ensure effective punitive measures are in place to discourage such profiting from human misery. There is a need for:

- Joint border police operations and more support to countries at the external borders of the EU.
- Enhanced cooperation with non-EU countries to tackle the phenomenon, whilst ensuring that those countries uphold legal and humane treatment of migrants.
- More legal channels to ensure migration flows takes place under safe conditions.

Operations at sea

Member States must recognise that current sea operations are insufficient to tackle the loss of lives at sea. There is a need to allocate more funding and assets, extending the operational area of search-and-rescue programmes and strengthening search-and-rescue capacities of Member States involved.

The priority of any action in this area must be to ensure no more lives are lost.

Civil Society involvement

We have seen unprecedented offers for help in the current crisis from civil society movements and individuals. The EU & Member States must recognise the value of partnerships with civil society and develop appropriate responses and mechanism to support such initiatives.



II. PLANNING: Addressing the root causes of migration with European and Global efforts

Member States and the EU cannot turn a blind eye to the underlying causes of migration. The deep and long-term causes of migration must be addressed with courage and determination. Additionally, Member states must develop responses to ensure the long term needs of those being given protection in Europe are addressed. As such, Member States must:

Invest in the resolution of conflicts and development in conflict and unstable regions

Solutions to the crisis will only come if the international community, the EU included, invest and increase efforts in peace building, conflict resolution, tackling terror and terrorism, promotion of stable, accountable and just governments and development in origin and transit countries.

Actions must be developed together with international actors, civil society organisations and citizens from Europe and from the concerned countries, ensuring cooperation, diplomacy and ownership. This will be possible only if Member States uphold and increase their support to overseas development assistance and they ensure that their spending, in combination with political & economic tools, are targeted genuinely and strategically and tied to action on human rights, conflict and peace resolution and governance in the conflict areas.

Integration of migrants in local communities

Those who are fleeing persecution and conflict are looking for a safe and secure home. As such each EU Member State must:

- Ensure the development of strategies to uphold the common basic principles of integration (including European values), translating them at the local level to ensure that migrants are able to fully access their human rights and play a role as citizens
- Support and implement programmes and initiatives to raise awareness about the migration issue, to encourage tolerance and solidarity toward asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection and to fight racism, xenophobia and all kinds of discrimination against migrants across Europe. This includes **working with local authorities, civil society, media** etc and formal and non-/informal education

The current situation represents an unprecedented challenge for the EU and Member States. We fully support efforts being made to tackle it and wish to emphasise the need to recognise **humanitarian dimension** of the current migration issue, while looking forward to seeing the appropriate decisions being taken to ensure fundamental human rights are upheld.

LADDER - Local Authorities as Drivers for Development Education & Raising awareness

ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy

SOS Malta – coordinator of the Migration Path of LADDER, **SKOP** (NGO Platform)

****The content of this letter does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the letter lies entirely with the authors****



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