

**CALL TO EUROPE IV CONFERENCE:
'BUILDING SOLIDARITY IN ASYLUM POLICY'
Executive Summary**

Towards a solidarity-based European Asylum Policy

In 2014, thousands of refugees died while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. The overall number of migrant arrivals last year via the Mediterranean was over 150,000. Only within these last weeks, two cargo ships were rescued in the Mediterranean: the *Blue Sky M* and the *Ezadeen* with hundreds of migrants on board.

Abandoning vessels packed with people is one of the most horrifying tactics employed by traffickers, who reap millions in profits from this illegal business. In his statement on January 2nd, 2015 Dimitris Avramopoulos, the EU Commissioner for migration called for a "decisive and coordinated EU-wide action" against the traffickers.

The figures stated above could not be a clearer sign that the EU needs to react now to make the Common European Asylum Policy a reality, based on solidarity at three levels: within the Member States, on international and the local level. The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) has prepared **twelve proposals** to serve the purpose of advancing the European Asylum Policy. The proposals are based on the debates within the annual conference "Call to Europe IV: Building Solidarity in Asylum Policy"¹ organised by FEPS together with its partners in November 2014 in Brussels. The content has been brought together by Sönke Schmidt, Advisor to FEPS and Former EU Minister Counsellor on Migration and Asylum Affairs to the UN.

Twelve proposals

1. proposal

Foundations and orientations of the EU asylum policy must be clearly spelled out, and the EU asylum policy rebalanced accordingly, so as **to align it comprehensively with European fundamental rights and its traditional**

¹ <http://www.calltoeurope.eu/en/>

value orientations, not just in words but also in spirit and action, backed by real political commitment and dedication.

The EU asylum policy must be realigned with a view to anchoring it firmly in Europe's legislative framework and value system, fully in line with the spirit and wording of the Lisbon Treaty.

Background

Progressive politicians, civil society representatives, and academics criticized the prevailing narrative accompanying the development of the European asylum policy which highlights security concerns, the risk of fraudulent abuse of asylum provisions, and the xenophobic undertones that often go along with it.

The Progressives' Position

The Progressive family must enhance its focus on one of the most urgent human and humanitarian challenges of our times. Irregular migrants and refugees are first and foremost human beings in extremely precarious situations. Many of those who embark on the long journey to Europe or other countries and regions that provide safe haven suffer from particular vulnerabilities. They need our help. Every life counts. Human rights are indivisible rights: the need to be effectively protected and promoted. The Progressive family is called upon to review mainstream policy narratives, language, and public attitudes, to realign and replace it by a compassionate policy discourse – not just in words but also in spirit and action, backed by real political commitment and dedication!

There was unanimous agreement that the full respect of human rights, solidarity, and the sharing of responsibility must be at the heart of the future EU asylum policy. Progressive actors should collectively engage against a policy narrative that is primarily driven by security concerns, and that is populist or even xenophobic by nature.

2. proposal

Whereas the adoption of the Common European Asylum System 2013 marks an important step ahead, its level of ambition is limited and fails to match up comprehensively to human rights and humanitarian standards. Whereas its implementation must be taken ahead, **European policy makers must also commit to further developing and replacing the CEAS in a follow-up step**, so as to develop and implement a truly integrated, common European asylum policy. This work should start immediately!

FEPS should contribute actively to developing a progressive asylum policy narrative that underlines the equal rights of irregular migrants and asylum seekers, firmly based on the indivisibility of their human rights. FEPS should contribute to raising public awareness and promoting progressive asylum policies at European and international levels. It should also work closely with its networks at national levels, with a particular focus on the positive role migrants and asylum seekers can play for our economies and societies, once and if effectively empowered and integrated.

Background

The Common European Asylum System has been subjected to heavy criticism by human rights and humanitarian actors. In many instances they are right, but in other cases, they are not exactly to the point. Clearly, the judgment that the CEAS is essentially broke is incorrect. The fact is that, at present, it has not even entered into force, and will only do so by mid 2015.

Whereas we need to give competent actors time to cope with a substantial implementation challenge at national levels, it is also obvious and uncontested that the CEAS as it stands will by far not be sufficient in setting up a comprehensive and ambitious European asylum policy in line with international law standards and the European tradition of solidarity inside and beyond Europe.

The Progressives' Position

With a view to informing and guiding national debates on policy development, there is a case for establishing ambitious policy objectives that aim, as a follow-up step to the CEAS, at a fully integrated European asylum policy, with a particular focus on establishing fully harmonized reception and qualification conditions based on a single decision making procedure. This policy should be shaped as of now, led by the European Commission, in close cooperation with public, civil, and private stakeholders. The Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Asylum Support Office must be involved in all aspects of the policy development. Evolving EU jurisprudence must be closely monitored in the process.

3. proposal

In particular, the future common European asylum policy **must be guided by and spelled out in line with the Lisbon Treaty principle of 'solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility'** (Art 80 TFEU). However, solidarity and burden sharing between EU Member States is not enough; it must be complemented with effective solidarity and burden sharing at the international level, and also with solidarity and burden sharing at national, regional, and local levels.

Progressive European policy makers should promote a fully integrated European asylum policy. FEPS and other Progressive actors should further explore the core structures and elements of that policy. EU actors are called upon to start the work on a comprehensive and integrated asylum policy without further delay. Core focus must be on (i) solidarity and burden sharing between EU Member States, (ii) solidarity at international level, and (iii) solidarity and burden sharing at national, regional, and local levels.

Background

Apart from weaknesses in the implementation of national asylum policies, the current Common European Asylum System suffers from a yawning solidarity gap that, at present, translates into mutual mistrust and prejudiced perceptions concerning the effects of a principled European asylum policy.

The Progressives' Position

The future European asylum policy must essentially be based on a comprehensive political understanding solidarity and responsibility sharing, which the Progressive family aims at promoting. Political commitment and consensus must be translated into operation, with appropriate and effective policy, legal, and financial instruments.

Solidarity and burden sharing between EU Member States

4. proposal

Despite the weaknesses of the current Common Asylum System, all EU Member States and the European Commission are held to maintain or enhance their efforts towards full implementation of legal provisions, including the Dublin Convention, so as to **ensure the convergence of national asylum systems towards harmonization**, build administrative capacities towards its effective implementation, and ensure an equally high level of protection for all asylum seekers.

FEPS stands ready to engage in a comprehensive policy dialogue at national, EU, and international levels, notably aimed at promoting a progressive, value based asylum policy that matches up to international standards. FEPS will promote a solidarity, responsibility, and burden sharing based asylum policy at EU, international, and national levels.

The EU asylum system is not broke. Its full implementation is due as of mid 2015: experience shows that implementation and enforcement of the new legislation will take time. It will furthermore be informed, guided, and driven by the evolving jurisprudence in this field. However, it is safe to judge that the current legislative framework is far from being satisfactory and calls already now for remedial action, in parts urgently, notably when related to the loss of life and/or the violation of human rights.

The core problem today is the mistrust and lack of confidence that has spread between EU Member States over diverging views on how to shape and finance the future EU asylum policy. This mistrust must be addressed and overcome without delay. There is no time to wait for the full and effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System over the coming few years, before taking the EU asylum policy to the next qualitative level.

If not properly addressed, some EU Member States may be tempted at subsequent stages to consider disengaging from the system, with heavy consequences for the functioning of the CEAS, but also for broader principle of free movement in the EU. Therefore, developing an effective and well-functioning asylum policy must be a top priority for the European Commission.

All EU Member States and the European Commission are held to maintain or enhance their efforts towards full implementation of legal provisions, including the Dublin Convention, so as to ensure the convergence of national asylum systems towards harmonization, build administrative capacities for effective implementation, and an equally high level of protection for all asylum seekers.

Background

Despite the obvious weaknesses of the Common European Asylum System, notably with regards to the reception and the qualification conditions for asylum seekers, all EU Member States must ensure full implementation. This is an integrated part of the asylum compromise. Any 'free riding' attempts will undermine the asylum consensus achieved and would render the difficult path ahead even more complicated.

The Progressives' Position:

While working towards the full implementation of the Common European Asylum System, all actors are held to address obvious weaknesses in the system, in particular with regards to the reception and qualification conditions, with regards to the setting up of effective referral systems for vulnerable migration groups, notably

unaccompanied children, and with regards to the promotion of alternatives to detention, while at the same time cutting back on unacceptably long detention periods.

Full implementation of the Common European Asylum System also comprises the Dublin Convention, despite the shortcomings of the latter.

At the same time, loopholes to circumvent or undermine the CEAS must be addressed, for instance by rendering identity and status determination obligatory for all persons entering the EU.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the Common European Asylum System,, its full implementation is a condition sine qua non on the way towards a comprehensive European asylum policy. All EU Member States must commit to its full implementation, supported by political will and unambiguous commitment to work towards an integrated European asylum policy.

The current EU Asylum Directives on Reception Conditions, Procedures and Qualification should be replaced by corresponding EU Regulations, based on a comprehensive evaluation carried out by the European Commission, taking due account of evolving jurisprudence, and be accompanied by a broad public consultation of competent stakeholders.

5. proposal

In parallel, the Progressive family calls on the European Commission **to take the European asylum policy agenda beyond the Dublin Convention** and submit a legislative proposal for a genuinely integrated EU resettlement scheme in which all EUMS participate, and which allocates reception quota to each EUMS, on the basis of an agreed formula.

This process should be closely monitored and assessed. It should form the nucleus of the future solidarity-based European asylum policy.

Background

Given the confidence crisis between EU Member States in the area of asylum, there is an urgent need to go beyond the Common European Asylum System as it stands, even if some Member States, driven by political short-term motivations, may claim that this be tantamount to setting the second step before the first. The Lisbon Treaty is clear in demanding 'solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility'. The Common European Asylum System does not match up to the constitutional standard established.

The Progressives' Position

Hence, FEPS demands and supports the swift adoption of a quota system to distribute asylum seekers between all EU Member States, which translates the principle of solidarity pragmatically into practice. The mechanism must be flexible, pragmatic, and fair, while taking the personal situation and preferences asylum seekers duly into consideration. The scheme should be introduced gradually. This initiative must become an EU flagship initiative that takes the European asylum policy to the next qualitative level.

In parallel, the Dublin Convention must be *gradually replaced* by the new scheme, *over time*. The setting up of a fair financial mechanism should compensate those EU Member States that exceed their fair share in shouldering the overall burden.

The Progressive family calls on the European Commission to submit a legislative proposal for a genuinely integrated EU resettlement scheme in which all EUMS participate, and which allocates reception quota to each EUMS and the basis of an agreed formula. This process should be launched with a view to gradually extending the new solidarity-based quota system, leading eventually to the full replacement of the Dublin Convention.

At the same time, a financial compensation scheme should be designed to compensate those EU Member States that have exceeded the country quota.

6. proposal

EU Member States must overcome mutual mistrust, close their ranks, and **commit to a roadmap on the phased implementation of an integrated asylum policy** that aims to, inter alia, commit to the implementation of the Dublin Convention, but to also go beyond it, with a view to eventually replacing it.

Based on a corresponding proposal by the European Commission, EU Member States should commit to both the full implementation and enforcement of the Common European Asylum System, including the Dublin Convention (Measure 4) and, in parallel, the phased implementation of a new solidarity-based burden sharing mechanism that gradually replaces the Dublin Convention (Measure 5).

Background

Mistrust overshadows and risks undermining the commitment of EU Member States to solidarity, responsibility, and burden sharing in the area of asylum policy. They reproach each other of not doing enough to make the Common European Asylum System work, or criticize its lack of ambition.

Countries with external maritime or land borders tend to deplore the lack of solidarity in shouldering their burden as provided by the law, including the Dublin Convention. In turn, affected Central and North European countries claim that it is them who bear de facto the main burden, given that the Dublin Convention remains largely ineffective in practice.

There is a latent risk in that disintegration and de-solidarization between EU Member States gain the upper hand. In a worst case scenario, such negative dynamics may even lead to the reintroduction of national border controls, hence jeopardizing the free movement of persons and the functioning of the internal market as such.

The Progressives' Position

Failure of the CEAS is not an option. The objective must be a common asylum policy aligned with internal market and the free movement of persons' standards. Whereas the CEAS remains yet to be fully implemented, there must be a renewed engagement and commitment of EU Member States to the elaboration of a single EU policy beyond the CEAS as it stands today, based on solidarity and burden sharing, in full respect of human rights. It is not an option to postpone the launching of a new initiative policy until the Common European Asylum System is fully implemented.

In order to turn the negative policy spin between EU Member States into a constructive process, FEPS calls on the European Commission to propose a roadmap that comprises national reform in line with the CEAS (Measure 4), the translation of the principle of 'solidarity and responsibility sharing' into operation (Measure 5). This should provide the basis for a practical roadmap towards coordinated national reform, mutual confidence building and a solidarity-based, integrated European asylum policy.

The approach proposed could take inspiration from the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum of 2008; it must aim at the gradual implementation of a fully integrated EU asylum policy, be well balanced, and be supported by all EUMS. The synchronized implementation of the roadmap should form the backbone of the future common policy, closely monitored and supervised by the European Commission, EASO, and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency.

International solidarity

7. proposal

The EU should be ambitious in further developing its international leadership in the areas of humanitarian assistance and international protection. Despite the challenges of refugee protection under the Geneva Convention, the **EU must also tackle other protection needs like environmental and climate change induced displacements**. Regional protection initiatives should also be promoted through public/private partnerships.

Against the background of globalization, international governance and internationally-organized effective responses **to global challenges** are increasingly important. Therefore, the EU must strengthen its engagement at UN level, alongside to and unambiguously supported by its EU Member States. It is unacceptable when some EU Member States profile themselves by diminishing or downplaying the role of the EU in the international arena, in particular when this relates to the development of policies addressing core EU concerns. The promotion of protection space in crisis-affected countries and regions, be it man-made or environmental and climate change induced, is such a core concern and requires effective and loyal cooperation between all EU actors.

At the same time, it is imperative that relevant administrative structures inside the European Commission work closely together, and overcome widespread and self-referential silo mentality. There is a need for all European actors to review and enhance their policy approaches in view of the enormous humanitarian challenges that mankind is likely to face in the future. Effective international solidarity starts with getting its own house in order.

As the principle of subsidiarity was developed and promoted to guide EU interventions internally, it is time to do likewise in international affairs, including in the area of international protection and humanitarian assistance.

As a matter of principle, governments should be in a position to cope with the consequences of man-made and environmental or climate change induced displacements endogenously: First, the EU should always prioritize related national efforts through its external support measures. Second and complementary, regionally-organized responses are often essential, in particular when dealing with acute crisis or protracted refugee situations. Third, international responses, such as those generated by the UN, must always complement and

support, but never replace the efforts undertaken by the actors concerned. Fourth, if the EU wants to enhance its role in and impact on the evolving global governance in this field, it must be ready and learn to lead by example. The EU must continue and further develop its unambiguous commitment to international solidarity and undertake the necessary efforts to become a respected, reliable, and trusted partner in international protection and humanitarian assistance.

Background

In the light of escalating man-made conflicts in the EU neighbourhood and an increased incidence of environmental and climate change crisis situations, the EU has to be effectively prepared for major protection and migration challenges, including with a protracted displacement situation emanating at its doorsteps, in and around Syria.

The EU's evolving approach to the external dimension of asylum and international protection foresees indeed assistance to the setting up of national protection and asylum systems. Its core focus is centred on so-called 'migration corridors' from Africa (Rabat Process and Khartoum Process) and Eastern Europe to the EU. This assistance is mainly channeled through EU Regional Protection Programs, which aim to support and foster solidarity and responsibility sharing in a specific regional context. In the humanitarian policy field, support is provided through various channels, including immediate relief, but also by promoting funded 'disaster risk reduction' and 'resilience policy' approaches. In the development policy field, the European Commission is also committed to the setting up of Regional Protection Programs, while adding a distinct development component.

European preparedness in Syria is a litmus test for the EU. This crisis demands a generous response from the EU. Whereas countries in the region are bearing the lion's share of the consequences, they deserve the full solidarity of the EU and other actors – morally, politically, and financially.

The Progressives' Position

Effective international solidarity is increasingly important as, in the future, the incidence of man-made and environmental or climate change induced displacements is foreseen to increase considerably. Furthermore, crisis and displacement situations in Libya and Syria have created instability in the immediate EU neighbourhood. However, at this point in time, the EU as an immediate regional neighbour with a strong humanitarian and human rights agenda is not living up to its own standards.

The EU should enhance its profile and engagement in relevant international fora and initiatives, with a view to rendering international solidarity in the field of protection operational, strictly based on the principle of subsidiarity. Risks to substitute national and regional responses must be avoided, while encouraging and complementing them through well-coordinated external policies.

First, the EU should seek to strengthen its role inside the UNHCR, notably by seeking accession to the Geneva Convention as full member, in line with its stated ambitions. At the same time, the EU should actively promote its partners to accede to and comply with the stipulations of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and notably encourage them to set up national asylum policies, including as an expression of regional solidarity.

Second, the EU should also effectively engage in developing a broader protection policy agenda that goes beyond man-made conflicts, and also comprises environmental or climate change induced displacements. The Nansen Initiative provides such a platform. Whereas the EU funds the lion's share of the initiative, the EU does not sit at the table when it comes to the shaping of future policies. This must change.

Third, the EU should give a strong signal of support to enhancing international solidarity and responsible governance in the field of humanitarian relief and international protection, with a view to rendering it operational and more reliable. In this context, the EU should actively promote the principle of subsidiarity, including at the level of the UN. It should also enhance its contribution to mitigating the humanitarian tragedy in and around Syria.

Fourth, the EU should further develop and refine its policy tools in support of national and regional solutions. The EU's Global Approach on Migration and Mobility identifies international protection and the external dimension of asylum as one of four core EU policy strings. Migration Partnerships, Regional Protection Programs, the evolving EU resettlement policy, and other related measures promoted through other sectoral EU policies (humanitarian, development, labour and neighbourhood) will gain importance and should be further developed towards a coherent external policy approach, in which relevant EU entities cooperate.

8. proposal

The European Commission is held to package its policies and the related funding, by establishing in depth internal coordination, notably between migration and asylum, humanitarian, development, labour, neighbourhood, and foreign policy services. A coherent policy concept will allow the European Union to become an effective actor in humanitarian diplomacy, not limited to providing funding governmental initiatives. FEPS

stands ready to partner with other policy stakeholders to support necessary solidarity-based policy developments conceptually, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

Background

Effective international solidarity starts with getting its own policies and priorities right. Migration and asylum are the most recent policy fields for which the European legislative framework foresees shared competencies between the EU and its Member States, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. At the same time, migration so far does not form part of the official OECD definition of development cooperation. This explains to some extent why EU and international policy reforms in this field are particularly urgent.

In addition, scientific analysis predicts an increased incidence in man-made, environmental and climate change induced displacements. It was hence imperative for the European Union and the European Commission to prioritize migration and asylum policy development. All European actors must review and enhance their policy approaches so as to jointly and coherently match up to the challenges ahead.

The EU's Global Approach on Migration and Mobility identifies international protection and the external dimension of asylum as one of four core EU policy prongs in this field. Migration Partnerships, Regional Protection Programs, the evolving EU resettlement policy, and other related measures promoted through other sectoral EU policies (humanitarian, development, labour, and neighbourhood) provide a good basis for a future coherently organized external policy approach.

Current EU funding for direct measures under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund is limited to less than US-D 70 million for the entire Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020. Neither is this sufficient to develop a complex policy in a complex context, nor does it reflect the urgency to contribute to durable and effective protection solutions.

The Progressives' Position

The EU should further develop and refine its policy tools in support of national and regional protection solutions by supporting national and regional initiatives on the one hand, and by directly contributing through resettlement and legal migration to the EU on the other.

In order to achieve this effectively, the incoming European Commission must bundle existing policy approaches, policy development efforts, and funding instruments. This includes mainly foreign, humanitarian, development,

migration, and neighbourhood policy mechanisms. The objective must be to maximize the effectiveness and impact of the EU's external policy action, including by overcoming silo mentality, wasteful competition, and to effectively bundle policy projection and funding. Only in combination will it be possible for the EU to establish itself at the forefront of humanitarian and protection policy developments.

The evolving Rabat and Khartoum Processes that establish a structured dialogue along migration corridors with countries of origin, transit, and destination, provide important opportunities to go beyond narrowly defined objectives, towards a meaningful policy dialogue on a variety of inter-related sectoral policies.

FEPS proposes to the European Commission that close cooperation between its competent Directorates-General be established. Most likely under the guidance of the European External Action Service, this cooperation mechanism should aim at establishing coherent policy tools and their coordinated use. Such a coherent policy concept will allow the European Union to become an effective actor in humanitarian diplomacy, not limited to providing relief, but also using its policy instruments effectively towards enhancing the protection space internationally and negotiating durable protection solutions for vulnerable displaced persons, based on an operational commitment to international solidarity.

Given the limited funding and conceptual challenges, FEPS stands ready to partner with other policy stakeholders and think tanks at the interface between humanitarian, development, asylum, migration, and neighbourhood policies, with a view to supporting necessary solidarity policy developments related to the external dimension of asylum and international protection.

9. proposal

Providing better access to the EU protection space is a core priority of the EU's solidarity-based external asylum policy. **It must be underpinned by legal and international initiatives as well as immediate operational measures to prevent casualties along refugee and migration corridors to Europe**, and to save lives as a matter of priority. Europe must learn to lead by example and use its policy tools strategically to underpin its evolving humanitarian diplomacy.

Background

The EU should further enhance its role and impact on the evolving global governance. The EU must continue and further develop its unambiguous commitment to international solidarity and undertake the necessary efforts to become a respected, reliable, and trusted partner in international protection and humanitarian assistance.

Active solidarity must not be limited to supporting affected countries through financial and technical assistance to cope with their responsibilities and burdens. At the same time, the EU must develop a compassion-based policy that opens legal and safe migration channels for refugees and other persons in need of subsidiary protection. Legal migration through resettlement or the issuing of humanitarian visa will strengthen the EU in its negotiation with third actors towards durable protection solutions. The EU must learn to use its policy tools more strategically in order to enhance its leverage effect. The objective is that the EU becomes a lead actor in humanitarian diplomacy, rather than providing funding for other actors to drive international negotiations in this field.

The Syrian conflict demonstrates the enormous efforts maintained by neighbouring countries notably Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. Instead, Europe falls behind its own standards, convictions, and values. In turn, it is only on the basis of an active and convincing display of solidarity and proactive engagement that Europe will succeed in its ambitions.

The Progressives' Position

Europe must become a major humanitarian actor that leads by example, based on effective international solidarity and commitment. It is only on the basis of active solidarity that Europe will be able to effectively engage in crisis situations, to mitigate and help solve acute and protracted displacement situations.

Europe must also enhance immediate efforts to avoid and prevent human tragedies alongside existing migration corridors. Casualties of refugees on the move and the violation of their human rights are intolerable. Not only must the EU engage in the prevention of human trafficking and smuggling, but it must also make systematic efforts to safeguard and save the lives of refugees and irregular migrants on the move. The commitment of all EU Member States to opening meaningful legal migration channels for refugees and migrants is imperative so as to counter the need for tens of thousands of refugees and irregular migrants to risk their lives on precarious routes. Full respect of human rights and solidarity must be at the heart of the future EU asylum policy. Every life counts.

Europe must abandon its narrow focus on the protection of its borders once and for all. The mandate of Frontex must be broadened by Search, Rescue, and Disembarkment tasks. Europe must further enhance its focus on life saving and minimizing human rights violations. Its laudable fight against human trafficking and smuggling will only be successful and effective once accompanied by considerably broadened legal migration channels: for

refugees, victims of other forms of displacement as well as for economic migrants. The European protection space must become truly accessible, including through the promotion of instruments such as external access to asylum determination procedures, the setting up of humanitarian corridors, accelerated procedures for refugees from war zones, effective temporary protection, and other measures that facilitate legal access on the basis of a integrated European policy based on solidarity and responsibility sharing.

The war in Syria poses a particular challenge to the EU. By enhancing its efforts to mitigate the consequences of the crisis, including through effective humanitarian, the EU can make an important step towards becoming a lead actor in humanitarian and international protection policy, leading by example, learning to use its policy tools in a synergetic and complementary way.

Solidarity at national, regional, and local levels

10. proposal

The Progressive family must enhance efforts to support the setting up of humane and effective national asylum systems. FEPS will engage with progressive stakeholders to support the setting up of national platforms for the monitoring of national efforts to implement the Common European Asylum System effectively.

Background

Apart from the need to harmonize national asylum systems in line with EU policy commitments, human, swift, and effective integration is also a matter of national concern to the Progressive family. Irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe have often gone through life-threatening situations and need special attention. This goes in general for vulnerable migrants, in particular unaccompanied children.

The length of the asylum procedure remains a major source of concern. Asylum requests must be swift processes and completed in line with high quality standards. Access to services, labour and equal rights must kick in at early stages of the process so as to set the agenda for swift integration.

At the same time, return policies must be realistic and take the effects of slow processing on the returnee into consideration. The victimization of returnees who cannot return for reasons outside their responsibility is not acceptable. Irregular migrants are not criminals and their detention must be avoided altogether, or be strictly limited. In case of necessity, swift assisted voluntary return should be the rule, assisted and supported through by bilateral readmission agreements between the EU and the country in question.

Progressives' Position

The setting up of effective national asylum system and the necessary administrative capacities to make them work are a core concern to the Progressive family. Referral systems for migrants with special vulnerabilities must be established systematically. Victimization of persons trapped by administrative procedures must be stopped after a reasonable period, and their integration taken ahead instead. Swift integration of refugees and asylum seekers must be the norm. The European Asylum Support Office must regularly monitor and supervise implementation standards. Civil society organizations should support efforts of competent administrations. If there is insufficient commitment by the authorities, civil society must perform effective watchdog functions.

A humane and solidarity-driven asylum system is not only a precondition for an effective European migration policy. It also depends on and contributes to a tolerance and solidarity-driven, progressive political culture at national levels.

The Progressive family and civil society stakeholders must enhance efforts to support the setting up of humane and effective national asylum capacities. Through its network of national political foundations and civil society groups, FEPS will engage with stakeholders, supporting the establishment of national platforms for the monitoring and implementation of the Common European Asylum System.

11. proposal

A coalition of Progressive actors should **elaborate a roadmap toward Equal Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**, and partner to campaign for equal political, civil and social, and economic rights at national levels.

The Progressive family is encouraged to promote equal rights for refugees, asylum seekers, and those who benefit from temporary or subsidiary protection. Designed returnees who cannot return for reasons outside their responsibility must also benefit from a solidarity-based equal rights and empowerment approach. FEPS stands ready to support this goal.

Background

The strengthening of national inclusion agendas targeted at irregular migrants and asylum seekers is not just about human rights.

It is also a legislative task on the path towards completing the free movement of persons in the internal market of the EU, in particular against the background of negative demographic trends in the EU and the increasing need to harness talent and skills in support of our economies.

Progressives' Position

Swift integration of our asylum seekers is a matter of human rights, moral values, solidarity, and economics, as well as social necessity.

In a Europe without borders, there is no place for limiting or undermining the free movement of persons. There are no constraining reasons why refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants that deserve specific protection should not benefit from equal rights and the free movement of citizens inside the Schengen Area. In the world Progressives want to shape, we need pathways for our refugees and asylum seekers so that they can accede education, labour markets, social services, and regularization procedures as soon as possible. Integration should also provide a pathway to full political rights.

Furthermore, in the light of negative demographic developments in Europe, it is economically imperative to valorize the talents and skills of our immigration population, including those of refugees and asylum seekers. Special focus must always be on children and their unconditional access to the education system.

The Progressive family is encouraged to stand up for equal rights for refugees, asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants with special subsidiary protection needs, and designed returnees that cannot return for reasons outside their responsibility. FEPS stands ready to partner with progressive Governments and civil society actors, including in particular trade unions, to promote a roadmap for refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants with special protection needs toward civil, social, economic, and political rights, including so as to strengthen the principle of free movement of persons inside the EU.

12. proposal

Progressive actors are encouraged to support local solidarity-based integration initiatives, including with a view to strengthening progressive cultures, creating protection space and integration pathways for those in need in pragmatic ways. Progressive Members of Parliaments at all levels, including the European level, should support local grassroots initiatives through effective means in their constituencies, promote integration champions and local best practices, including through parliamentary initiatives.

Background

The Lisbon Treaty foresees EU support for the national integration efforts of its Member States. Integration legislation and policy remains under national competence, whereas best practices are being developed and promoted and EU level, and funding provided in support of local actions. The European Integration Forum provides an important platform for the exchange of views between the European Commission and national civil society representatives on questions of immigration, including those related to refugees and asylum seekers.

At the bottom line, integration is local by nature. Hence, the roles of local communities and civil society are crucial. And hence it depends on them to a considerable extent, how reception conditions are organized, and the integration process supported through a welcoming environment.

At best, local communities and civil societies work towards compatible objectives; by exploring the leeway national legislation allows them to promote equal rights and empowerment of those in need.

Where this is not possible, civil society can enhance advocacy, inter alia by identifying and promoting effective protection space, campaigning for a supportive administrative environment, and building broad citizens' coalitions, including the business community.

Progressives' Position

There is yet scope to enhance the role of civil society and local communities in promoting effective integration and empowerment of the arriving new members of our societies. We can build solidarity from below. Initiatives to create protection spaces at local levels should be supported by regional and national progressive actors, and by progressive MEPs as spokespersons of local progressive initiatives that merit to be supported or promoted as best practices. The scope of action provided by national legislation should be explored with a view to launching creative integration initiatives below the radar of national regulation. Overall, civil society has to play an important role as watchdog for governments and public administrations, as service provider, as advocacy actor, and as change agent.

FEPS will undertake necessary efforts to activate its networks with a view to recreating and promoting solidarity based open local societies. Progressive Members of Parliaments of from EU, national, and regional levels should support such local initiatives, and promote integration champions and local best practices, including through parliamentary initiatives. The network should also explore participation modalities in the European Integration Forum.