



Migration: MEPs debate EU response

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MEPs discussed on 20 May European Commission plans to tackle the large numbers of migrants seeking to reach the European Union, often risking their lives at sea. Commission vice president Frans Timmermans and migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos announced a number of measures, including an emergency mechanism for relocating migrants, a resettlement scheme to take in migrants from countries outside the EU and more funds for securing borders.

Council Presidency representative Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica welcomed the Commission's initiative and the tripling of resources for the EU's external border agency Frontex. She added that governments have also decided to establish an EU military operation aimed at "breaking the business model of human smugglers".

Meanwhile Timmermans announced that next week the Commission will propose a temporary relocation mechanism "to help release the pressure off frontier countries". "This is not about migration in general, but about the extreme crisis situation that demands a clear response," he said, adding: "Tackling illegal migration in the roots means securing our borders and saving lives, but also applying correctly our common asylum rules, and we need the commitment of member states."

"Our immediate neighbourhood is on fire and Europe is seen as a refuge in times of instability," said migration commissioner Avramopoulos.

German EPP member Manfred Weber said that "we are collectively as Europeans called upon to respond to the challenge" of migration. He welcomed "the solidarity mechanism" and added "we are willing to continue to work on the good job initiated by the Commission".

"Europe is often accused of not doing anything. With these measures, we are showing that Europe can act," said Italian S&D member Gianni Pittella. "We have to put an end to the smugglers' networks, but we don't want any military action or violence."

UK ECR member Timothy Kirkhope criticised the plans to redistribute asylum seekers in Europe: "We have a moral duty to assist one another, but true solidarity is offering assistance because it is the right thing to do, not because we have been compelled."

Belgian ALDE member Guy Verhofstadt called for common European action addressing the crisis in neighbouring countries: "We did nothing in Libya, we did nothing in Syria and that's one of the reasons why so many refugees are seeking to enter the European Union."

German GUE/NGL member Gabriele Zimmer criticised what she saw as a repressive approach towards refugees: "These are people in enormous difficulties and repressing refugees does not make a contribution to solving their problems. It only creates more terrorists."

"The only approach by the Council, which everyone agrees on, is more frontier checks, more people being sent back and more military operations being launched. Yesterday we heard about the Hungarian refugees in 1956, who were welcomed with open arms by other countries in Europe - where are the open arms now?" asked Dutch Greens/EFA member Judith Sargentini.

UK EFDD member Nigel Farage reminded that he had warned the Commission that the common EU asylum policy had no security checks: "That was a real genuine threat of ISIS

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using this policy to infiltrate our countries and to pose great dangers to our societies.”

Vicky Maeijer, a Dutch non-attached member from the Netherlands, expressed her concerns with "every country receiving a proportion of illegals and terrorists", adding: "We are making the migrants traffickers rich and this is not the way."

Find out more

- Steps of the procedure:
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/2648\(RSP\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/2648(RSP)&l=en)