

## POSITION PAPER

### A. First section

The European Union has been facing its worst migration crisis in history in the recent years, reaching its peak in 2015 with over more than one million asylum seekers entering our territories. This critical situation has without a doubt been dealt inefficiently and has thus revealed great flaws within our institutions. However, we must underline the fact that Southern European states have been directly exposed to the consequences of massive arrivals. Considering that the frameworks of the Dublin III regulations impose responsibility of member states for arriving individuals, Italy and Greece have, hence, been obliged to handle an overwhelming number of immigrants. While some member states have clearly stated their will not to participate in a mutual resolution of the situation, we must not forget that common external borders represent a European public good. Thus a fair sharing of responsibility is required to ensure the sustainability of our union and, in turn, avoid any coercive and stringent sanctions.

### B. Second section

	Number of arriving immigrants 2017	Percentage of immigrants in relation to population	Accepted asylum seekers 2018
Italy	343,440 (120,000*)	8.3%	135,858
Greece	112,247	7.6%	60,083
Hungary	68,070	1.65%	137

Sources: Statista, Eurostat

\*Number of immigrants arriving by sea

Even though the numbers of irregular immigrants -refugees, economic migrants and displaced people- entering the European Union have been decreasing since 2015, when over 1 million migrants made their way towards European borders, there still exists a high flow of immigrants arriving especially via sea. The Mediterranean countries, namely Italy and Greece, have been particularly affected by these immigration flows from countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Sudan and Nigeria, and our capacity to respond to the situation has proven to be inefficient as our systems have been overwhelmed. In 2017 alone Italy had to deal with 120,000 individuals entering our country via sea; in 2018, Greece saw 28,700 migrants arriving by sea and 14,000 by land (The Guardian, 2018), which has been a challenging situation for a country that is dealing with the highest unemployment rate and public debt in the European Union.

Geographic location has served as the most defining factor for the burden a country has to endure in regards to asylum applications. According to the Dublin III Regulation the state responsible for administering and processing an asylum-seeker's request is the first state the claimer enters -this treaty is outdated, unequal and widely ignored in political reality, imposing considerable weight on coastline countries like Greece and Italy because of the outlet these nations have to the Mediterranean sea where immigrants from North African and Middle Eastern countries undertake travels to enter the European Union. Furthermore, the time to process asylum applications varies according to each state, and some have sluggish processes that can last up to 180 days like France and Austria, which adds more pressure on frontline states in terms of overcrowded migration centers and economic and administrative loads -for example, when children arrive in Italy without a guardian the local mayor is appointed as responsible for the minor (The Local, 2017). In 2016 Italy spent 1.7 billion EUR on the reception of immigrants, while the EU only covered 46.8 million of these costs (European Parliament, 2018). Additionally, Italy has been strained by the cost of unsuccessful relocation of immigrants to other member states, which amounted to 762 million in 2017 (European Parliament, 2018). In Greece, the EU only covers 70-80% of the costs beared by the country when it comes to services provided to the 60,000 asylum-seekers and immigrants that live in the coastal nation (Aljazeera, 2018).

In 2014 the EU allocated 47.9 million EUR to Italy as part of our Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, and Greece received 3.8 million EUR from this same source (European Commission, 2014). Nevertheless, these grants proved to be inefficient as migrant centers in both countries grew substantially overcrowded, as has been previously stated. NGOs are urging our countries to relief population density in our centers as refugees face hurdles in the form of physical and mental health issues, which our insufficient staff has to respond to, resulting in inadequate conditions and mounting burden on our public services (The Local, 2017).

Our states work hard to overcome own economic and structural challenges while tending to the migrant influx we have been confronting due to our geostrategic position; however, with focusing on fighting unemployment and debt, we do not have the administrative and economic capacities to undertake the larger share of the burden.

### **C. Third section**

Our frontline countries are not satisfied by the reaction of other European states as we feel sidelined and required to find own solutions to handle the intense challenges; it is unacceptable that our states are left alone to deal with the consequences of the migration crisis while other states do not contribute. Keeping in mind the following principles, we believe that a stronger response from our partners should rise to the occasion, as we have abided to these parameters ourselves and fulfilled our international commitments:

1. The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees has established an international guiding principle of non-refoulement.
2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 guarantees the right for asylum-seeking.

3. The European Union's declared commitment to the protection of Human Rights, social inclusion, human dignity, solidarity and equality in a framework of mutual respect and cooperation.

When we joined the European Union we expected to work towards a cooperative panorama and a brotherly coalition that would foster development within and outside our Union and become an worldwide banner of collaboration, unity, and Human Rights protection -we believe that our particular contribution towards this end has been substantial and sizeable, as predominantly demonstrated by our response to the migrant crisis that arised in 2015. Unfortunately, our capacities have been pushed beyond the limit and we now require vigorous enforcement of what brought us together as European nations: cooperation and fraternity. We are aware of the ongoing conflicts that adjacent regions are encountering and, even if we are taking action towards the fulfillment of long-term goals in regards to global peace and security, we acknowledge the challenges we must keep facing in the upcoming years concerning immigration.

As Southern European states, we feel certain that the following policy-mix is the best solution for our nations as well as the European Union respecting the aforementioned circumstances: firstly, distribution quotas of asylum seekers; secondly, a fair redistribution of individuals granted asylum; thirdly, conditionality and, lastly, an increased budget to control and protect EU borders. As a second solution, we propose an alternative regime to the current quotas system.

The upcoming paragraphs elaborate on these methods in more detail. Most importantly, binding quotas for each country determining a certain number of asylum-seekers these countries have to process each year. To ensure this regulation is followed a mechanism has to be established, we suggest conditionality as explained in point three.

As some nations facing an enormous amount of refugees coming, others have not collaborated and merely processed asylum cases. If we want to be a strong Union, this can not be the path to follow. In the future, we need a fair redistribution mechanism. To ensure that all countries follow the rules we, together as the European Union, should establish a binding conditionality for the subject of migration, in particular for processing asylum seekers. This conditionality should be enforced by the reduction of cohesion funds for those nations favored by them, or financial sanctions for those who do not enjoy the mentioned capital, and who do not comply with the enactment of our agreements as a bloc in regards to quotas.

To efficiently deal with individuals seeking asylum in a structured manner, the EU borders need do be secured at all times. It is therefore in the interest of all member states to improve the protection of these borders. Therefore, we strongly suggest to increase the funding of border surveillance in the next MFF.

However, we realize that the quotas system has so far proven to be difficult to safeguard as certain countries do not abide by their responsibilities, and in this regard we propose the creation of a strong European Refugee Agency that centralizes and standardizes our efforts to respond to the crisis and crystalizes our loyal cooperation and intra-solidarity duties. The European Refugee Agency would receive its own budget and coordinate action towards

strengthening member states' asylum and reception systems, as well as ensuring that there is an effective distribution formula that relocates claimers while working hand-in-hand with the European Border and Coast Guard (FRONTEX) and the UN Refugee Agency. The Agency would be required to process asylum claims in an even manner after first entry, considering a country's economic status (GDP, unemployment rate, sovereign debt), the claimer's particular preference, population density and number of asylum applications previously accepted and under process. After processing the applications, the Agency would have the authoritative power to supervise that responsibilities are being carried out.

## **CONCLUSION**

The union has strengthened our economies, it has improved the life of our citizens, it has expanded the possibilities for cooperation and is it self-evident that all member states have benefited from it., in other terms, we need the union, now more than ever before. Still, this wonderful ship that we are sailing on is still not ready to face tough waters. It is then our duty to act as one and not only for our state-level interests. Our goal is therefore to ensure that all member states will be given a fair share of responsibility in the upcoming crisis, without limiting our sovereignty and avoiding unnecessary sanctions. Today, we call upon our colleagues to reconsider their positions and to join this coalition which we strongly believe will benefit us all.

## **Sources**

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