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**CPMR POLICY POSITION**

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## **CPMR POLICY POSITION ON MIGRATION MANAGEMENT**

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An unprecedented number of refugees enter Europe on a daily basis. Since the beginning of the year 500,000 people have made their way into the EU, mainly through the Mediterranean. The vast majority of these people are fleeing from wars, terror and dictatorships.

This is a complex European and international issue and needs to be addressed in a suitable and comprehensive manner through the concerted action of European, National Regional and local authorities. An appropriate response should include a wide-ranging approach that addresses, first and foremost, the root causes of the issue that oblige thousands to leave their homes, families and countries behind. Such an approach should also include alleviation of the humanitarian emergencies faced at EU borders, in line with European Union values and in full respect of human rights, safety requirements and dignity. It would require on the one hand implementation of the Schengen acquis and on the other hand effective identification and registration of migrants. It would also necessitate revisiting EU immigration policy and respective bilateral VISA agreements between the EU and the countries of origin of economic migrants. The latter, together with development cooperation, would allow part of the irregular economic migration to eventually become regular and easier to handle. Finally, a comprehensive approach would recognise the positive contribution of migration on development from a demographic point of view and would also require care, provisions and specific medium and long-term measures for a smooth socio-economic integration of migrants into the European society. The latter would entail better and faster procedures concerning on the one hand asylum handling and allocation of refugees between countries, and on the other hand more efficient integration provisions, such as language learning, faster evaluation of skills and social innovation that would enable the migrants to get a job.

The EU response has so far failed to rise to the occasion. The relocation of 160,000 migrants from the countries mostly hit by the migration crisis, notably Greece, Italy and Hungary has been agreed. However, the figure is clearly too low to ease the problem, destination countries are not defined, and mechanisms that would prevent secondary movements of migrants are not in place. Other than that, the EU Council has not reached a unanimous decision on the European Commission's proposal for mandatory quotas and very few countries have set an ambitious target vis-a-vis the number of migrants that they would accept. Furthermore, this pressing problem has revealed, once more, the challenges of a European common approach to the issue, and accentuated divisions, and even in some cases, breaches of EU legislation.

At the territorial level, Regions in the Mediterranean have so far borne tremendous pressure and significant responsibilities with regard to the humanitarian emergencies, on an ad-hoc basis, and without the necessary resources and means to properly handle the excessive numbers of people entering their territory very often over counting their autochthone population. In addition, Regions all over Europe have taken upon themselves not just receiving but also integrating high numbers of refugees in their communities. Regions cannot stand alone anymore. They wish and need to be included in a European integrated multi-level governance solution and, according to their competences, play a complementary role to Member States.

Peripheral and Maritime Regions from all over Europe do have excellent good practices to showcase on both short-term humanitarian emergencies management, cooperation with third countries in the field of assisted voluntary returns, as well as on medium- and long-term integration policies. These include examples from

Sicily, Calabria, Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur, Catalonia, Skåne, Tuscany, North and South Aegean islands Andalucía, Emilia Romagna, Puglia, Valencia, Balearic Islands and Abruzzo. Among other initiatives, CPMR Regions of the Mediterranean have addressed an [open letter](#) to the Heads of States and Governments asking for their solidarity and a [letter to President Juncker](#) proposing the use of unspent European Funds to partly fund the experienced emergencies. In addition, the President of the Association of Greek Regions and the Governor of North Aegean [met with President Juncker](#) to discuss among others the refugee crisis. Regions have also actively demonstrated their solidarity by endorsing the awareness raising public petition campaign "[We are All Mediterranean](#)". The campaign highlights among other things the values of solidarity, cooperation, integration, and dialogue, as well as the fight against racism, xenophobia and terrorism. It received the full support of the President of the European Parliament, Mr Martin Schulz, in the framework of a specific meeting before the waves of refugees population became so important, where the Presidents of Mediterranean Regions and the Mayor of Lampedusa presented their main concerns and proposals concerning the current challenges faced.

**Having this in mind, we the Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe, depending on our means, resources and competences, undertake to:**

- Provide sufficient care to people in need, especially to children and unaccompanied minors, as far as health, provisional accommodation, social support and access to education and training are concerned.
- Increase efforts to financially support the actions of local and regional humanitarian aid associations in third non-EU countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Libya and Syria in providing assistance in refugee camps.
- Create synergies between our local and regional actors of decentralised cooperation in order to foster joint-projects and joint-humanitarian aid programmes.
- Promote the integration of refugees students in our regional universities in order to let them continue their academic cursus and to obtain an EU-recognised diploma.
- Financially contribute to national plans on humanitarian crisis response supporting reception and registration activities as well as assisting victims of humanitarian crises abroad.
- Strengthen transnational and cross-border cooperation to exchange good practices between territories<sup>1</sup> and also facilitate dialogue among the citizens to build trust and solidarity.

**We, Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe, call for:**

- A **global integrated approach** to address the current migration crisis at its roots. In this context it is imperative that peace-making efforts by the International Community for the resolution of conflicts within the greater Mediterranean area are intensified and humanitarian aid to neighbouring EU countries is further strengthened.
- More **solidarity and support to Mediterranean Regions** aiming at an effective management of humanitarian emergencies in line with European values.
- A **re-examination of EU migration policy and improvement of legal migration channels** through bilateral agreements (e.g. social security, mobility) with neighbouring countries of origin of economic migrants, which would contribute to strengthening their socio-economic relations in the medium and long-term.
- A considerable increase of efforts and resources dedicated to the **socio-economic integration** of migrants and **actions to promote their self-employment** (e.g. through micro-credit programmes<sup>2</sup>) and the **Social**

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<sup>1</sup> After the [first policy position](#) of the Mediterranean Regions on migration policy and [the work carried out in the framework of the ARLEM](#), the CPMR created in February 2015 a specific [Task Force](#) on migration management.

<sup>2</sup> Given the economic crisis, self-employment in micro-enterprises could be more effective than job placement efforts, especially in reception countries where the unemployment rates are very high (e.g. Greece, Spain, Italy) and job opportunities are very low. Microcredit programmes, if accompanied by capacity building and language learning courses, could constitute an efficient solution for helping both the reception countries and the migrants. Because of the rotation of the micro-credit capital, with a small amount of funds, the programmes could help many people to be economically independent, exploit or improve entrepreneurial spirit and skills and reduce subsidies. For such programmes to be effective, a real cooperation among the EU, the local and regional authorities, the banking sector and the NGOs on the ground is necessary.

**and Solidarity based Economy** in all the neighbourhood area (in the framework of general, national and regional policies for employment promotion);

- A stronger participation of Regions in the consultation and decisional processes for migration and development, two of the priorities of the international agenda, which would be beneficial for the interactive connections between the two policies.

#### **In this respect**

#### **We welcome the recent decisions of the European Council to:**

- Increase funding to address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa and help the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and other agencies with at least an additional 1 billion euro
- Assist Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis, reinforce the dialogue with Turkey at all levels in order to strengthen cooperation on stemming and managing the migratory flows and assist the Western Balkan countries on handling migrants flows
- Further increase resources for Frontex, EASO and Europol to tackle the dramatic situation at the EU external borders and strengthen controls at those borders
- Enhance the funding of the Emergency Fund for Asylum, Integration and Migration and the Internal Security Fund-Borders.

#### **and urge further the Council to:**

- Undertake additional policy initiatives to address the causes of all types of migrant flows (e.g. wars, famines, human rights violations, lack of socio-economic development and decentralisation policies in the countries of origin, such as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Libya and Tunisia).
- Show more solidarity to countries at EU borders and materialise the means and define the financial resources “to support them in their efforts to strengthen the reception capacities, the asylum system, the management of the external borders in full respect of human rights and safety requirements”<sup>3</sup>.
- Improve procedures and mechanisms concerning on the one hand asylum handling and quotation of refugees between countries, and on the other hand efficient integration with emphasis on education and employment.
- Adopt adequate measures and proposals that would share the burden and responsibility among Member-States, such as a revised Dublin Regulation.
- Adopt as a matter of priority measures that will allow the rapid and effective implementation of the decision for the relocation of 160 000 migrants from Greece, Italy and Hungary.
- Involve local and regional authorities in the national delegations that will debate on Migration at the Valletta International Summit on 11-12 November 2015, and from now on in all relevant events or debates on this issue.
- Increase the amount of European Funds that can be used in priorities of the Migration agenda in the opportunity of the review clause of the Multiannual Financial Framework in 2016.

#### **We, appreciate the recent announcements of the European Commission**

- To allow maximum flexibility to Member States to change programmes within the European Structural Investment Funds 2014-2020 in order to adapt to the new circumstances and foresee actions related to migration.

#### **and impress upon the Commission to:**

- Accelerate the revision of the Dublin Regulation in a way that would ensure a fairer share of the burden and responsibility among Member-States.

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<sup>3</sup> As foreseen for Greece according to the conclusions of the Presidency of the Council of 14 September 2015.

- Further simplify and accelerate the procedures of distributing European funds for migrants and offer to Regions the possibility of direct access to financing from the relevant Directorates (e.g. DG Migration and Home Affairs), amending the relevant regulation that currently excludes them.
- Facilitate the redirection of the currently unspent funds within European solidarity programmes of the period 2007-2013, notably the European Structural Investment Fund and the Neighbourhood Instrument, towards priorities of the Migration agenda.
- Build on, reinforce and expand existing regional cooperation frameworks with neighbouring countries and strengthen the links between Migration Policy, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Cohesion, Neighbourhood, Enlargement and Development Policies and explore possibilities for an integrated Fund.
- Actively facilitate synergies between Regions, international NGOs and European Agencies, in view of the creation of eligible formations, which, in the context of existing regulations, would directly mobilise resources from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (and other funds that will be enabled to cope with the migration crisis).
- Explore the possibility of facilitating measures or mechanisms for the self-employment of migrants and launch relevant EU initiatives, such as a specific micro-credit programme.

**We plea the European Parliament to:**

- Request an increased funding allocation for Migration and foresee the eligibility in the Fund of competent international organisations that could contribute with expertise and best practices.
- Examine the possibility of proposing amendments to the relevant Regulations in order to allow direct access of Regions to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.
- Call for a budget-line for a pilot project, preparatory action or other, to address issues related to emergencies and integration in the territories most affected by the migration crisis.
- Highlight the scale of the problem, as well as the need for wider cooperation and consensus in the context of an expression of solidarity towards the people fleeing wars, terror or dictatorships and endorse the solidarity campaign “We are all Mediterranean”.