



Ten Points to Tackle the Refugee Challenges **Adopted by the PES Presidency on 16th June 2016** **Approved by PES Leaders in Paris on 7th July 2016¹**

The Party of European Socialists has been calling for a united response to tackle the refugee crisis since it began. This strong response, which is based on solidarity and confidence, should be built around a genuine and coordinated EU migration and asylum policy given that no EU country should or can deal with the matter on its own.

We want a Europe of tolerance, equality and unity. We want a Europe that does everything possible to prevent people from dying in the attempt to reach our continent and welcomes all those who have the right to be here and integrates them into our societies to make our societies thrive. Our answer to the challenges posed by the enormous flows of refugees is based on a **fair sharing out of responsibilities and solidarity**. We demand responsibility from countries so that they fully implement the Schengen rules and the Common European Asylum System legislation on relocation but we call also for a broad reform of the European asylum system. We stand in solidarity with those who are fleeing war and persecution and we stand for solidarity between Member States. This has to be our answer to those who want to use this crisis to see Europe fail, to divide our societies and to promote hate and fear.

Our political family hailed the migration agenda proposed by the European Commission last May and is now proposing common solutions. We are the richest continent in the world. We can do more if we act together.

We call for:

- 1. A European response.** We expect a fair and long lasting solution, which reflects a real and strong European response, taking into account the fundamental rights of refugees and sticking to the principles of solidarity, responsibility and humanism. Further harmonisation

¹ CSSD Czech Republic and SD Denmark declared themselves unable to implement some provisions of the Declarations and are thus declared not bound by this Declaration, in line with Article 20.7 of PES Statutes.



and acceleration of asylum rules and decision processes is urgently needed. The internationally recognised human right to asylum and protection is fundamental and should continue to be a cornerstone of our policy. We call on Member States to show their solidarity with Greece and Italy today, and other countries tomorrow, by offering the required aid to handle the humanitarian emergency. We also call on Member States to significantly increase joint European assistance to the affected regions of origin.

2. It is time for us to take a holistic approach to asylum, taking into account the fact that it represents a real opportunity for all. However, achieving this requires considerable amounts of investment today to ensure better integration of the refugees arriving in our countries. We must propose effective **integration policies**, which provide access to basic rights, such as education, healthcare, social housing, training, access to the labour market and guarantees for a decent standard of living. These policies must be developed in close cooperation between national, regional and local authorities which deal with these issues on a daily basis. Integration policies should also revolve around helping refugees become self-sufficient in a domestic labour market. Participation in the labour market on equal terms with the European population helps integration by providing a better understanding of society, languages and the practices of both the refugee and domestic populations. It also cultivates a sense of empowerment in the individual. Furthermore, the swift integration of refugees increases broad public support and tolerance. **Education** in particular is one of the cornerstones for the **integration** of children and their families into our societies and we must foster it. Through language, education and (re)training tailored to their needs we enable refugees to participate and thrive in their new environment. This way we do justice to the new residents and also their new communities within Europe too. Europe will be enriched by it culturally, economically and socially. **Healthcare and medical assistance**, in particular for pregnant women or female victims of sexual exploitation and violence, should be an integral part of the assistance provided. Violence occurring in any form against individuals within refugee camps, especially towards LGBTI and women and between different religious groups must be prevented by national authorities. We need to ensure that **specific reasons** for persecution, particularly gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, are addressed appropriately throughout the examination of applications as well as in the context of resettlement and relocation. This implies systematically and fully trained personnel working in the asylum authorities, according to obligations under EU law. We believe that a specific **gender strategy for refugees** encompassing sexual, health, safety, discrimination, cultural and economic issues is necessary. Europe is also obliged to find a solution for the issue of **unaccompanied minors** who might become victims of trafficking in human beings destined for exploitation, such as sexual exploitation and forced labour or services. Therefore the early



identification of victims of trafficking within the refugee population is an absolute necessity and adequate shelter must be provided for unaccompanied minors in all EU countries. More has to be done in the best interests of the child; they must be registered immediately, be provided with special care addressing the specific needs of minors and be reunited with their family as soon as possible or be assigned a guardian. Children should not be detained. We need sufficient tools and programmes at Union level to cope with the size of the job. Some EU programmes and financial instruments that deal with the social aspects of refugee crises need additional financing.

3. Member States should comply with what has been agreed in previous summits and take their responsibilities seriously. In the long term, we need to carry out an in-depth reform of the European asylum system. Firstly, the Dublin regulation, under which refugees must apply for asylum in the first country where they arrive has never functioned fully as intended and has completely failed in the context in which there have been a much larger number of arrivals from 2014 onwards. We believe that a fundamental overhaul of the Dublin rules is necessary to allow a fair distribution of refugees across the Union. This revision should establish a system where the asylum claim has a truly European dimension and is not linked with one country. As a consequence, we should **implement the resettlement and relocation decisions**. We strongly believe that a **future permanent, binding scheme**, granting the refugees the procedural guarantees that they are entitled to according to the EU Asylum Procedure Directive and Reception Conditions Directive, would ensure the better management of the refugee crisis. Finally, we **have to consider the returns** of people not entitled to asylum **by ensuring humane treatment** in line with the principle of non-refoulement; recalling that voluntary returns should be prioritised over forced returns. Detention should be minimised and only used as a measure of last resort. In general we need a stronger harmonisation of the CEAS (Common European Asylum System), common asylum procedures and receptions standards among all Member States. A more harmonised assessment of international protection applications should be also on the agenda.
4. **Safe and legal avenues** - Managing legal channels for refugees requires a common European solution (for example through humanitarian corridors, by strengthening the provision of humanitarian visas in the Visa Code, family reunification, private sponsorship schemes, flexible visa arrangements and a permanent and binding EU-wide system of resettlement) that would uphold EU values, dismantle smugglers' businesses and save lives. Member States should quickly provide large numbers of places for resettlement. We will follow up the recent discussions on humanitarian visas.



- 5. Implementation of the statement with Turkey** – We take note of the latest statements with Turkey. This is the first step but not a final solution for several reasons: first, because refugees will still be coming to Europe and smugglers will find other routes for their businesses and European countries must be ready and able to provide a quick answer to these risks. Even one death in the Mediterranean sea is too many. As a direct effect of the EU-Turkey statement fewer people are risking their lives and fewer people are drowning between Turkey and Greece. It is our common task to help Greece deal with the administrative challenges. We saw how quickly refugees adapted to new routes when the Balkan route was closed. They immediately changed it to other countries. The implementation by all parties should be done by taking into account all international and European human rights laws, above all respect for the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. Turkish accession to the EU should not become entangled with the refugee crisis. We want to progress with talks on Turkish accession, in line with our values and ensuring respect for media freedom, human rights, an independent judiciary and the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria which all countries wishing to join the EU must meet.
- 6. The external dimension** of the EU's migration policy was addressed in the **Migration compact** proposed by Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. As mentioned in the proposal, Europe needs to address the external dimension of its migration policy and create initiatives and financial instruments that focus, first and foremost, on countries where migrants originate from or transit. It is crucial to have high social investments in these nations. However, investments should be oriented towards a commitment to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to improve quality of life and reduce migration flows. We need to strengthen our cooperation in order to mainstream migration, fight against trafficking in human beings and enhance legal migration opportunities and resettlement schemes.
- 7. Tackling the root causes** – We strongly believe that sustained efforts to end the conflicts, find long lasting solutions for peace and stability in the Middle East region as well as in the Sahelo-Saharan zone, a high level of commitment to development and increased support to the relevant UN Agencies are key to tackling the root causes of involuntary migration. We stress the importance of an integrated 3D approach: defence (security), development (reconstruction and inclusive growth, European neighbourhood policy) and diplomacy (political solutions).
- 8. Common External Border Management** - The fair sharing of responsibility is essential when it comes to the protection of our external borders and is complementary to national responsibilities. Common external border management will contribute to guarantee security



by preventing and fighting criminal activities. Border management should not mean border closures but an efficient management of the external borders is vital for the functioning of the Schengen system. We support the initiative to create the European Border and Coast Guard.

9. Standing firm for Schengen - Schengen is one of the greatest achievements of the EU. The Schengen area should be completed with all EU applicant countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania) and therefore strengthened. We want the European Union to carry on being a strong protector of peace, progress and prosperity for all, where Schengen cannot be disentangled and the EU values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the Rule of Law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, are fully respected. As socialists and democrats we believe that we must promote a culture of tolerance and respect for fundamental rights. We need to foster good examples of reception and integration of refugees and positive multicultural experiences. We need to change the debate on the refugee crisis to counter the populist backlash against immigration, which is contributing to anti-EU sentiment. The far and populist right in Europe has no solution other than the promotion of fear and xenophobic language. Their narrative of fear does not correspond to our values. Compassion, understanding and practical solutions are the only way forward.

10. A global conference on the future of migration policies should be organised under the auspices of the UN soon and on a regular basis. This idea would initiate an in-depth and a long-term reflection, in which the entire world community would be involved, to develop coherent and responsible migration and asylum management processes. Our progressive political family stands for and protects freedom of movement, the right to security and fundamental rights. These are fundamental to the human civilization to which we are attached and that we have to defend. We will therefore start the process by organising a conference on July 8th in Paris.

