



Brussels, 23 April 2015

Presidency declaration ahead of the Extraordinary EU Council meeting

The Party of European Socialists (PES) is shocked and saddened by the tragic events that took the lives of hundreds of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea in the last few days. The migration and refugee crisis urgently requires a joint reaction. We express our sincere condolences to the families and relatives of the victims.

Our first priority must always be the protection of human life. We should act together in the spirit of solidarity with the people seeking protection and promote the fair sharing of responsibilities among all 28 Member States. We welcome the great efforts of Italy and Malta in dealing with these emergencies until now. Europe's credibility is at stake. We urge the European Union to deliver a real and strong response, because migration is our common priority, not any single country's issue alone. To prevent such tragedies in the future, the PES, on behalf of all Members of our family proposes:

Protecting human lives

We call for the reinforcement of the Triton and Poseidon Frontex Operations, which are currently too limited to monitoring tasks, increasing their search and rescue mandate. We call on all Member states to reinforce solidarity in terms of assets and means in view of a wider European rescue operation in the Mediterranean. We have to protect the human dignity and fundamental rights of migrants and protect them from all forms of exploitation.

Fight against smugglers

The smuggling of migrants is a highly profitable business. We must prevent and fight these criminal activities by seizing the assets of smugglers and by pooling intelligence. The EU should take joint actions and strengthen cooperation with third countries to build capacities to fight against criminal networks. Supporting the EU Strategy on Trafficking of human beings would improve the protection and rights of the victims.

Stronger cooperation with third countries

The majority of refugees do not come to Europe, but remain in countries neighbouring their countries of origin that are already struggling to keep peace and stability. The EU should provide adequate support for those countries receiving large groups of refugees due to their vicinity to conflict areas, help building refugee centres and strengthen humanitarian aid.

Safe channels for refugees

Safe and legal channels for refugees are important to reach Europe. We will immediately push for new solutions to share responsibilities and reception capacities in the case of mass arrivals by creating a fair system for relocation, providing humanitarian visas and family reunification. Managing legal channels for refugees would strengthen security in Europe, taking in consideration respect of fundamental rights and human dignity.



Legal migration can turn migration into a real opportunity for all

Well managed migration and integration can become a tremendous opportunity that Europe should not miss as it can enrich our continent culturally, economically and socially. New citizens can, and do, play a key role in revitalizing our economies, and large parts of the real economy and our labour markets rely to a great extent on their positive contribution.

Commitment for Development

We need to tackle the root causes of migration and improve safety and quality of life in migrant's countries of origin. Our first priority should be seeking to stabilise the political and humanitarian situation in war-torn areas, such as Libya, Syria. The EU should enhance its programs for the promotion of democracy (support political pluralism, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law) and economic development.

The PES will make sure that EU efforts are fully focused towards safeguarding human lives, protecting refugees, constructing effective migration policies in Europe, and fighting against criminal organisations and human trafficking in cooperation with third countries.

