

FORCED MIGRATION AT THE INTERSECTION OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND REFUGEE ADMISSIONS IN EUROPE

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Policy brief





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SLOGA
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The policy brief was drafted within the project “Faces of Migration, SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens”. The project aims at raising awareness on the Sustainable Development Goals, migration and their interconnectedness.

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Introduction

While freedom to move is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 13), current migration flows in Europe are often contested in present day discourse. Nevertheless, “mobility is a universal feature of humanity. People have been mobile and migrating since the beginning of time, and will not stop doing so.”¹

Despite migration being a phenomenon linked with human history, higher number of arrivals of migrants and refugees to Europe has exposed many issues related to migration and integration policies, but also development cooperation policies, since political discourse on migration has often emphasized the need to “address root causes of migration”. This policy paper explores interlinkages of European Union (EU) and its Member States’ commitments in the field of migration and development policies.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human rights and migration

Human rights are essential for achieving sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has been adopted in September 2015 in New York by all United Nations (UN) Member States as a set of global, universal goals to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The SDGs hence set universal standards for ensuring human dignity and decent life, and promoting prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. The 2030 Agenda is anchored in human rights, including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and the Declaration on the Right to Development (para. 10). The SDGs strive towards realizing the human rights of all (preamble), and emphasise “the responsibilities of all States /.../ to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status” (para 19).

While according to CONCORD Europe³, migrants and diaspora are often not fully recognised as actors and subjects of sustainable human development, the 2030 Agenda recognizes for the first time the contribution of migration to sustainable development. Similarly, IOM emphasizes that with the 2030 Agenda, “/f/for the first time, international migration was recognized as an integral part of global sustainable development.”⁴ Migration is a cross-cutting issue, relevant to all of the SDGs. 11 out of 17 goals contain targets and indicators that are relevant to migration or mobility,

1 Source: CONCORD Europe, 10 myths about migration and development, available at: https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/10myths_migration_development_EN_newversion.pdf.

2 Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

3 Source: CONCORD Europe, Deconstructing 10 myths about migration and development – publication, available at: <https://concordeurope.org/blog/2016/03/09/publication-myths-migration-development/>.

4 Source: IOM, Global Migration Indicators 2018, available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/global_migration_indicators_2018.pdf.

including the Agenda's core principle to "leave no one behind" (including migrants). The SDGs' central reference to migration is made in target 10.7 to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies, which appears under Goal 10 to reduce inequality within and among countries⁵.

Europe, forced migration flows and durable solutions

While Europe registered more than a million arrivals in 2015, the number of arrivals has been falling since 2016. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) data⁶, in 2019 123,920 arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers has been registered (2018: 144,282 people; in 2017: 186,788; in 2016: 390,456). The number of asylum claims in the EU has reached a peak in 2015 with 1,321,600 asylum claims, with the number of asylum applications significantly decreasing in the next years (2016: 1,259,955 asylum claims; 2017: 705,705; and 2018: 646,060 asylum claims).⁷ There have been 2,476,361 registered refugees in the EU in 2018.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been recording a growing trend in forced displacement; in 2018, the global population of forcibly displaced increased by 2.3 million people, with almost 70.8 million individuals forcibly displaced worldwide (a record high) by the end of the year due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations⁸.

Depending on circumstances of refugees, there are various options of so-called durable solutions "that allow / refugees/ to rebuilding their lives"⁹: voluntary repatriation, resettlement in another country or integration within the host community. "Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement."¹⁰ UNHCR is mandated for the resettlement, and countries decide to take part in the programme. "In recent years, the United States has been the world's top resettlement country, with Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Nordic countries also providing a sizeable number of places annually."¹¹ Resettlement States provide the refugee with legal and physical protection, including access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals.

By 2018, resettlement had been embedded as a policy priority at the EU level following several stand-alone joint resettlement programmes, with EU funding available for resettling Member States through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In 2015, as recent and protracted conflicts and crises around the globe caused record-high numbers of asylum-seekers and migrants to cross into Europe, the European Commission presented the European Agenda on Migration, a guiding document pointing out short- and long-term measures to collectively respond to the numerous challenges EU Member States faced. Among the immediate actions to be taken, the Agenda highlighted the proposal for an emergency temporary mechanism to distribute within the EU persons in need of international protection who claim asylum on EU territory and belong to certain nationalities (relocation), and the establishment of an EU-wide resettlement scheme for refugees with specific needs and vulnerabilities to arrive from third countries.¹²

EU resettlement scheme was launched in July 2015 following the EU leaders' agreement the previous month to resettle 22.504 refugees in two years. Over 24 000 people have been resettled as of March 2019. The resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees in Turkey was set up following the EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016. Close to 21.000 Syrians have been resettled so far through this scheme as of March 2019. In September 2017 the Commission ad-

5 Source: Migration Data Portal, available at: <https://migrationdataportal.org/sdgs#0>.

6 Source: InfoMigrants, Migration to Europe in 2019; available at: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/21811/migration-to-europe-in-2019-facts-and-figures>.

7 Source: European Union, Asylum Applications, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/infographic/welcoming-europe/index_en.html#filter=2018.

8 Source: UNHCR, Global trends – Forced displacement in 2018; available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>.

9 Source: UNHCR, Solutions; available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/solutions.html>.

10 Source: UNHCR, Resettlement; available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>

11 Id.

12 Source: The European Resettlement Network, Resettlement in Europe; available at: <https://www.resettlement.eu/page/resettlement-in-europe>.

opted a recommendation calling on member states to offer resettlement places for 50 000 people, to be admitted by 31 October 2019.¹³ But “EU has delivered only three-quarters of a two-year program due to be completed by the end of October /2019/.”¹⁴

Conclusions and recommendations

To ensure full implementation of the 2030 Agenda principle of “leaving no one behind” and of the target 10.7 to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies, the EU and its Member States should strengthen their commitment for resettlement of refugees. By increasing the refugee admissions through the resettlement programme, the EU and its Member States would reiterate its commitment to and leadership in promoting universal human rights and achieving sustainable development for all.

These commitments should be supported by allocating adequate resources for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in line with growing needs worldwide, strengthening the EU role as the largest donor of development aid in the world.

Following the growing number of forced displacement, the two commitments of enhancing legal pathways to Europe through

1. expanding the refugee admissions (and thus preventing the death toll resulting from people undertaking perilous journeys to escape unworthy living conditions) and
2. strengthening means of implementations for the 2030 Agenda ensure coherent policies for full implementation of the SDGs.

13 Source: European Council, How the EU manages migration flows; available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/migratory-pressures/managing-migration-flows/>.

14 Source: DW, EU breaks promise of safe passage for 50,000 refugees; available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-breaks-promise-of-safe-passage-for-50000-refugees/a-50803664>.

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