



STATEMENT INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS' DAY 18TH DECEMBER 2019

Today 18th December 2019 is the **International Migrants' Day**, a time to raise awareness and denounce the challenges and human rights violations that migrants face daily worldwide and in the European Union.

Four years after the presentation of the European Agenda for migration in 2015, the European Union seems to be at a standstill. Not only have the negotiations on the **reform of the Dublin Regulation failed**, but migrants and newcomers' living conditions in the EU represent a humanitarian crisis. Member States' involvement and solidarity towards the newcomers remains limited. Even though some small positive steps forward have been done following the [Malta Summit](#), we need a **European Union based on solidarity, where newcomers are welcome.**

Newcomers, fleeing from wars, unstable countries and poverty, find in the EU even more insecure environments, where they see their fundamental rights violated. Access to EU Member States' territory has become more difficult. Very frequently people wishing to apply for asylum are denied entry to the EU or are returned, without the possibility to apply for protection; or in certain cases collectively pushed back at land or sea borders. SOLIDAR's members have denounced that police and border guards reportedly ill-treated migrants, particularly on the Western Balkan route, and in Spain. Moreover, in some border zones, such as Lesbos, Ceuta, Melilla and Lampedusa, hundreds of thousands of migrants remain stranded for years waiting to complete the procedures necessary to obtain refugee status.

The [conditions of migrants are worrisome in the Western Balkans](#). The violence by the local police has escalated in the recent years after the closure of the Balkan route. In addition, many civil society organisations denounce the inhuman conditions in reception centres and camps. In addition, we denounce the agreements with **Libya**, where the political instability is still worrying and migrants are subjected to serious abuses in detection centres, and by the Libyan Coast Guard itself.

We need to stand up against the **criminalisation of solidarity** that is spreading among our Member States. Since 2017, some European governments have criminalised civil society organisations and NGOs involved in search and rescue operations in **Central Mediterranean** (e.g. the security decree in Italy). Populistic and nationalist parties have used migrants as scapegoats to the worsening socio economic conditions in the countries, as is a clear case in **Hungary**. The political priorities for the reception of migrants have incrementally shifted from saving lives and organising their reception, towards ensuring the security of European borders.

The focus on a "securitisation-driven" approach, has led the European Union to neglect the creation of common integration policies that promote education, employment inclusion and social inclusion: policies based on the principle of fairness, and effective both in the short and medium term.

Finally, we see as alarming the decision of the newly elected **European Commission** to divide the portfolio on migration between the Commissioners Margaritis Schinas, *Promoting the European Way of Life*, and Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for *Home Affairs*, as we need a more uniform approach.

In the light of the above-mentioned issues and in response to the challenges and work of our members, **SOLIDAR calls for:**

A MORE HUMANITARIAN APPROACH TO MIGRATION

We ask the European Commission to consider **migration as a humanitarian matter**, more than a security problem. People migrating to Europe are bolting conditions that risk their lives. We need to welcome them in our society, considering firstly their fundamental rights and their dignity. SOLIDAR's members are at the frontline providing support and services to newcomers, making up for the lack of provision of humanitarian aid from governments. This is why we call for more responsibility and engagement from the European Union and National governments, in order to guarantee decent living conditions and fundamental rights for newcomers.

STOP THE ATTACKS AGAINST CIVIC SPACE AND CRIMINALISATION OF SOLIDARITY

The attacks on the civic space have had political, legislative and financial consequences for all our members. Particularly, those working on migration issues have experienced harsh backlashes due to the criminalisation of solidarity. We demand the EU links the respect of the rule of law by Member States to European funds, and to establish ways for CSOs to apply to more funds without governmental filters (e.g. through governmental agencies managing the distribution of funds at the national level).

INTEGRATION POLICIES – INCREASE SOCIAL INVESTMENT AND EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS

The newly elected European Commission needs to **boost social investments**, also at European level. Our members' expertise and experiences - from education to civic engagement, from the recognition of qualifications and skills validation to training courses, from access to labour rights, from healthcare system to housing - show that social investments can better support the social integration of newcomers and contribute to building more cohesive societies.

FINALISE THE REFORM OF THE DUBLIN REGULATION AND INCREASE EUROPEAN MEMBERS' SOLIDARITY

We call upon finalising the reform of the Dublin Regulation, as set in the report approved by the European Parliament during the last mandate. The decision, on *if and how* to reform the Dublin Regulation, is now in the hands of the Council only. The most divisive issue is the most important: the current Dublin regulation provisions read that asylum seekers must complete the procedure that may assign them the refugee status in the country of arrival. The European Parliament proposed to reform it by introducing a permanent and automatic relocation system of asylum seekers. Concerning this point, in the next months it would be important to set the discourse around values, putting pressure on policy-makers **to identify solidarity-driven solutions that work for all.**

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