



This project is funded by the European Union under the 7th Research Framework Programme (theme SSH) Grant agreement nr 290752. The views expressed in this press release do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



nopoor

www.nopoor.eu

Enhancing Knowledge for Renewed Policies against Poverty

REFUGEE CRISIS AND EU REACTION: An urgent call for a clearer and more active role

Statement by Nopoor Migration Expert Ramon Mahia
Autonomous University of Madrid

Regional and transnational migration have always been driven in part by poverty and economic inequalities. So-called "voluntary" and sometimes "economic" or "labour" migration is not only conducive to greater well-being for the migrants themselves. It also reduces poverty in the origin communities and has a positive overall effect on the societies of the more developed countries that receive them. At EU level, receiving country migration policies attempt to regulate migrant entry, reception and integration based on common foundations and regulations.

Forced migration differs from immigration: the refugee movements and flows of asylum seekers clearly call for a particular approach. The EU does NOT have an immigration problem right now. So EU immigration policy is not the right way to address and solve the current crisis.

Forced migration and flows of asylum seekers to our borders are the result of extraordinary, usually traumatic, events that call for an extraordinary, targeted approach using unified mechanisms for quick, coordinated and effective responses in crisis situations. The EU and its member states have failed to come up with a suitable approach, using instead weak, slow, ineffectual and poorly coordinated mechanisms to address the current events. The EU does not yet have a regulatory plan or fully functioning protocols and, possibly worse still, does not have a political consensus as to the roles and responsibilities of its members and institutions in this situation.

Extraordinary measures are vitally needed now, and this has absolutely nothing to do with the migration and integration policy corrective measures required in the medium and long term. Europe must react promptly and with humanity to a crisis that needs prompt, humanitarian action. Yet it should also seize on the current situation to rethink at least its migration policy, the agenda for real policy integration and its geostrategic role in the Mediterranean and Middle East. This is no mean task. It will require careful analysis of objectives, alternatives and actions as well as closer coordination between member states and EU institutions. But the momentum gained by the current crisis could be a good starting point for these analyses.

There is no way to prevent or even curb short-term massive movements due to disasters and wars like these. Closing borders and a purely protective strategy based on nothing more than dissuasive FRONTEX mechanisms is simply wrong and powerless to stop massive inflows in the face of a refugee crisis. Border surveillance is clearly ineffective and, worse still, generates



This project is funded by the European Union under the 7th Research Framework Programme (theme SSH) Grant agreement nr 290752. The views expressed in this press release do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



nopoor

www.nopoor.eu

Enhancing Knowledge for Renewed Policies against Poverty

clandestine immigration, encouraging trafficking and endangering the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

If refugees arrive at EU borders to seek asylum in the EU, they cannot simply be confined to neighbouring countries. The EU and the member states must manage their own borders and conflicts consistently. The creation of "temporary" settlements in pre-EU neighbouring countries under EU funding and management may be able to temporarily alleviate the tragedy of displaced persons in transit. Yet this represents "de facto" EU border outsourcing and consequently an obvious restriction of the right to asylum in the countries of the European Union. These settlements are also, as is already the case in other countries, major pockets of poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion, which the EU will be explicitly sponsoring.

The short-term reception and integration of hundreds of thousands of refugees is inevitable and is a highly complex task that calls for extraordinary measures on various fronts with a realistic budget. Looking at the medium and long term, the constant flow of immigrants has for decades been the only solution to alleviate the loss of human resources in an increasingly ageing Europe. However, the simultaneous arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants is something very different; an extraordinary event that calls for extraordinary measures. These extraordinary measures could have huge benefits in terms of short-term recovery: construction of shelters, psychological treatment for those affected by the immigration ordeal, schooling for children, language learning, and all the work involved in raising employability and intercultural mediation and training call for substantial human and budget resources that could also boost activity and employment in some host countries.

The EU cannot choose its location on the map, but it can decide on its political and geostrategic role. The EU and its member states need to resume and prioritise their role as a geopolitical player in the eastern Mediterranean and work unstintingly towards the political stabilisation of the region in the medium and long term, incorporating immigration into their approaches. In the short term, they need to promote and lead with strength and determination processes that will achieve at least a truce in the wars that cause displacement and the establishment and defence of humanitarian corridors. In the medium and long term, they need to reconsider and drive forward their geostrategic approach in the region and adopt a clearer and more active role.

Ramon Mahia
Applied Economics Department
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Autonomous University of Madrid

Scientific coordinator: Xavier Oudin (oudin@dial.prd.fr)
Project Manager : Delia Visan (delia.visan@ird.fr), +33153241466
www.nopoor.eu

Visit us on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn