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17 March 2014

## The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration

### Motion for a resolution

tabled by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Greece, Malta, and Spain, among others, are each facing tremendous migratory pressure. These countries have great responsibility in monitoring Europe's southern borders: Greece has a vast coastline and a myriad of islands; Spain has the only European Union land borders with Africa in its enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla; and Malta lies at the level of Tunisia and receives several thousands of migrants by boat. The situation in each of these countries is expected to increase in severity as the violence in Syria and sub-Saharan Africa continues.

The economic crisis, which hit Southern Europe particularly hard, has compounded the issue, and gave rise to an upsurge of racist violence and an increase in support for extremist parties.

In September 2012, the Greek government announced that it planned to toughen its measures against irregular migrants. The recent operation Xenios Zeus was introduced with the stated purpose of returning undocumented migrants to their countries of origin. The Spanish Interior Ministry has also announced measures to strengthen the border fences at Ceuta and Melilla.

Greece, Spain, and Malta have all been subjected to much external and internal criticism for the way they have treated migrants. A new wave of sharp criticism rose from the recent tragedies in Spain and Greece.

The Parliamentary Assembly should look into the situation of migrants and asylum seekers on the Mediterranean coastline. Yet, this is not simply a Mediterranean problem; it is a European problem and presents a test case for European solidarity on how to deal with issues at Europe's external borders and their related consequences.

