

Resolution 2050 (2015)¹

The human tragedy in the Mediterranean: immediate action needed

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its utmost concern about the ongoing humanitarian plight of irregular migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea. The dramatic increase in the death toll in recent weeks has become a matter of urgency which should be addressed without further delay.
2. In 2014, the total number of irregular migrants and refugees who crossed the Mediterranean Sea amounted to over 210 000, including 170 000 arrivals in Italy. At the same time, 3 500 people perished at sea. Over the first three months of 2015, the figures amount to over 30 000 arrivals and 1 500 drowned at sea. Regrettably, each day brings new reports of dramatic events.
3. The lack of legal ways for refugees to come to Europe makes them dependent on dangerous routes and has already caused the loss of thousands of lives. Smugglers exploit the vulnerable position of refugees by putting their lives at risk. The boats used are often unseaworthy and, to maximise profit, they are always severely overcrowded; basic safety equipment is inadequate or completely lacking; there is insufficient food and water available for passengers; and often the smugglers themselves abandon the boat on the high seas, leaving the migrants to rely on their own minimal ability to navigate, and the hope of being rescued by public authorities.
4. It has to be recognised that the current increase in the number of victims is partly a consequence of the termination of the Italian Mare Nostrum search and rescue operation, due to the lack of solidarity from countries of the European Union, which has not been living up to its responsibilities, and its replacement with the European Union Triton operation, with a narrower mandate and much smaller human, budgetary and logistical resources. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the side effects of the Mare Nostrum operation which many observers think contributed to the increased flows of seaborne migrants setting out from North Africa.
5. The sharp increase in the number of arrivals once again puts into question the Dublin Regulation according to which the entire responsibility for receiving and processing irregular migrants and asylum seekers is laid upon a limited number of receiving countries, Italy in particular, but also Malta, Spain and Greece. This sharp increase raises questions about the relevance of the present asylum law and procedures.
6. The situation is not likely to settle down in the near future. Armed conflicts and instability, persecution based on ethnic or religious grounds and extreme poverty in Africa and the Middle East will continue to generate large numbers of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Estimated figures refer to 70 000 people waiting for boats on the Libyan coast. Turkey alone has received some 2 million people fleeing the war in Syria and Iraq.
7. The recent declarations of the leaders of the terrorist organisation known as "Islamic State" announcing their intention to smuggle their own people in among the flows of refugees, tasked with committing terrorist attacks in Europe, have raised legitimate questions about security.

1. *Assembly debate* on 23 April 2015 (16th Sitting) (see [Doc. 13764](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Thierry Mariani). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 April 2015 (16th Sitting).



8. The recent tragic incident when, as a result of a fight which broke out on one of the boats, nine migrants of Christian origin were allegedly thrown overboard by passengers of Muslim confession, coupled with recent reports about the killing of 27 Christian migrants by the so-called "Islamic State" on the Libyan coast, raises very serious concerns.

9. The Assembly is of the opinion that the key challenge is to reduce the number of people setting off on a dangerous sea journey. It is crucial to identify and address ways to decrease migratory pressures in the countries of origin and transit.

10. The Assembly therefore calls on the member States of the European Union to adopt a comprehensive approach to deal with mixed migratory flows across the Mediterranean, with a view to implementing urgent and concerted measures, and in particular to:

10.1. strengthen, as a matter of urgency, search and rescue operations at sea, with increased contributions from all member States;

10.2. adopt effective measures and co-ordinate common action at European level in the fight against human traffickers and smugglers;

10.3. review the Dublin Regulation with a view to sharing responsibility and costs for receiving and processing irregular migrants and asylum seekers, with quotas for their distribution throughout the European Union member States determined by each country's population and economic resources;

10.4. increase legal alternative migration channels, including resettlement, facilitated access to family reunification and other protection entry mechanisms advocated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);

10.5. step up humanitarian aid and development projects in the countries of transit and origin with a view to improving standards of living in these countries and help to develop capacity building and institution building in countries of transit and of first asylum with a view to alleviating migration pressures;

10.6. enhance co-operation, including administrative, judicial and investigative co-operation with the countries of origin and transit, in particular on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea;

10.7. ensure access to asylum for those in need of international protection by introducing the possibility of external application processing and, to this end, thoroughly review, if necessary, asylum policies.

11. The Assembly welcomes the 10-point action plan on migration of the European Union Council of Ministers of 20 April 2015 introducing short-term measures aimed at handling some of the challenges with regard to irregular migration in the Mediterranean and the decision today to convene an extraordinary European Union summit. However, the Assembly considers that the measures announced are utterly insufficient and expects the comprehensive European Union Agenda on Migration, due to be announced in May, to address the issues mentioned in the previous paragraph.