

ADDRESSING MIGRATION WITH A SYSTEMIC, CIRCULAR APPROACH

Italian Non paper on Migration in view of the extraordinary European Council (Feb. 9-10, 2023)

The increasing migratory pressure on the European Union demonstrates the need for a quantum leap in our migratory policy. The available data are quite self-explanatory: in 2022, Italy alone was the destination of more than 105,000 irregular arrivals by sea, but the rising migratory pressure is felt across most of the EU.

The current EU paradigm, based on the artificial distinction between “primary” and “secondary” migration flows, is misleading. It brings a distorted perception of the issues at stake and spurs an artificial contrast of interests between frontline Member States, on one hand, and Member States that migrants aim to reach, on the other. More aptly, migration should be construed as a unitary phenomenon to be addressed by Member States and institutions alike in a spirit of solidarity, with a **comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy**.

Building on the proposals contained in the Commission’s New Pact on Asylum and Migration, Italy suggests the following approach.

a) Outside the EU: medium-term cooperation with third countries

The external dimension of migration policies constitutes the real structural solution in **preventing irregular migration and stabilizing flows**. A more tangible commitment by the European Union and its Member States is essential to guarantee adequate resources and to identify priority sectors. We need to strengthen our engagement with third countries of origin and transit along all main migrant routes, creating full-fledged partnerships, focusing in particular on **territorial and border control, fight against human trafficking, awareness campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, voluntary returns and readmissions**. In this regard, we need to oversee the full and effective implementation of the Commission's "**New Agenda for the Mediterranean**", so as to enhance the potential of the "**EU Southern Partnership**" in terms of collaboration on migratory issues.

These efforts must be underpinned by **meaningful financial resources**, based on the Team Europe approach that drives the two TEIs launched on 12 December 2022. We should also ensure that the concrete allocation of European funds is constantly in line with our strategic goals in this field. We are currently falling short in the implementation of the NDICI regulation, if we consider that it clearly establishes that indicatively 10% of the funds should be allocated to migration and that this percentage should be dedicated in particular to actions supporting the management and governance of migration and forced displacement.

Moreover, we must make the best use of valuable tools such as the external projection of the Agencies – which should be strengthened with a particular focus on the Mediterranean routes – and the contribution of CSDP missions.

To encourage third Countries to cooperate, **the EU should use all available levers**: policy dialogue, rewards in cooperation, trade conditionalities, visa mechanism. As a matter of priority, we should also promote a strengthened and coordinated approach in readmission policies towards irregular migrants – both at the EU and bilateral level – in order to improve their efficiency.

These are all preconditions to accelerating the implementation of the EU “Action Plans” for third priority countries, in particular in key sectors of intervention such as voluntary returns and capacity building for coast guards of Southern Mediterranean countries.

Any serious EU strategy should include forms of legal migration and mobility, as a sign of our commitment to truly comprehensive migration partnerships.

The Italian pattern of **humanitarian corridors** envisages safe and legal pathways while also ensuring an orderly management of migratory flows. The involvement of other EU Member States in such schemes would multiply the virtuous circle generated by such humanitarian operations. We also call for the development of **European humanitarian corridors**, coordinated and financed by the European Commission, as a way to guarantee safe and legal access to Europe to vulnerable people, while also fighting human trafficking. Finally, while being well aware that this would remain in the national competence of each Member State, we are convinced that specific national schemes for well-monitored granting of working permits or study-visa might be terrifically effective in boosting third countries cooperation in this sector.

b) Before migration: addressing the root causes of migration, in particular in Africa

A truly comprehensive strategy on migration must seek to address the root causes of migration in key third countries as a matter of priority, to address the core reasons behind irregular migration. Full implementation of the “Agenda for the Mediterranean” is key in this regard, with the aim of contributing to create a favorable political environment to address conflicts and political frictions in the MENA region, our immediate neighbor, while at the same time ensuring the adherence of the Agenda to the strategic challenge presented by the Russian aggression of Ukraine. With particular reference to Africa, also as a form of actual implementation of the 2020 EU Strategy for Africa, in parallel with the full and effective implementation of the **"New Agenda for the Mediterranean"**, we call for the elaboration of a **new EU Pact for Africa**. Such a pact should contain a clear offer of development cooperation, and focus in promoting investment, strengthening education and vocational training, creating new business opportunities and employment, and fostering job creation. EU efforts in promoting the double transition, green and digital, also beyond the EU borders, might offer a unique opportunity of a win-win approach for everyone at this regard. It should be implemented with adequate financial resources from the EU budget and MS’ contribution. The involvement of the international development banks, the European private sector and eventually a new EU dedicated instrument should be envisaged. This would prove our real will to alleviate the root causes of migration and provide viable alternatives to the business model of migrant traffickers.

c) Approaching the EU: a better Coordination on Search and Rescue

It is vital to ensure the safety of human life at sea and an orderly management of Search and Rescue operations, avoiding that not carefully coordinated activities might place an additional burden on coastal States. This would imply the need for a closer cooperation between States, including when it comes to operations carried out by private vessels (merchant and NGO) flying the flag of Member States and Associated countries. Since the majority of these activities involve cross-border cooperation with countries other than the flag States of vessels, a general framework of agreed guidelines would facilitate the cooperation. The EU Council should call for a swift implementation of the European Commission's initiative to that end, in order to ensure that coastal Member States, non-first entry partners and private operators cooperate effectively in a spirit of true solidarity.

d) Within the EU: striking a balance between solidarity and responsibility

Being a common social, economic and political space, the EU cannot help considering the arrivals of migrants from third countries as a matter of common interest. A joint approach on border controls, procedures, management of flows, asylum processes etc. is therefore in order. The legislative reform of European migration and asylum policy we are currently discussing aims at updating and upgrading the different aspects of our migratory policy, but also at correcting what has not been working so far. However, this requires an effort to strike the right balance between the two key components identified by the Treaty: **solidarity** and **fair sharing of responsibility**.

As for the former, **mandatory relocations** must be the heart of any solidarity mechanism in order to provide effective and predictable relief to frontline Member States. **We are all aware that relocations do not represent the structural solution to migration flows**. But in the short term they remain a necessary tool to give solidarity a meaningful and concrete image. However, in order to be effective, this requires significant improvements compared to the voluntary mechanism established following the June 2022 Political Declaration on solidarity, which is still far from being fully implemented. In this perspective, it is therefore important to **take into account the impact of NGOs' sea rescue operations**. While consolidating this mechanism, we should also focus on additional forms of solidarity, such as **financial contributions for external action initiatives** with third countries of origin and transit.

It is in the common interest of the entire European Union that responsibilities placed upon frontline Member States are sustainable on a permanent basis. In this respect, an effective management of the EU's external borders shall be ensured taking into account the specificities of sea borders, compared to land and air borders and the burden that the mass influx of migrants places on coastal States.