

LADDER

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

Ladder Consortium Joint Statement- Reactions to the European Council Conclusions on migration - June 2016

In response to the European Council Meeting of the 27th and 28th June 2016, we, the consortium of LADDER¹ wish to express our disappointment regarding the conclusions on migration made by EU member States which continually risk securitising the reaction to the migration crisis. With this statement we wish to reiterate the need for *Humane, comprehensive and immediate action for Migration*. The European Council Meeting on the 27th and 28th June was an opportunity to come to concrete conclusions on how to tackle this crisis. However, we believe positions taken by the European Council on the 27th and 28th of June, in the framework of the Valletta Action Plan, the EU-Turkey Statement and the new Partnership Framework with Third Countries, have to be questioned in terms of their focus on deterrence, security and return at the cost of upholding fundamental Human rights enshrined by the EU Member states themselves. The following elements of the EU Council Conclusions are in particular a cause for concern:

1. The systematic return of irregular migrants: A risk for the respect of their human rights

The current position taken by the European Union is that flows of people should be highly controlled. In this perspective, in collaboration with Member States and their partners, the European Union proposed a policy consisting of the systematic return of irregular migrants.

We would like to reiterate and remind EU Member States of their mandate to protect the fundamental rights of persons including Article 19 which specifies «*No one may be removed, expelled or extradited to a State where there is a serious risk that he or she would be subjected to the death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*». The process of return and resettlement implemented by the EU-Turkey statement and reaffirmed by the European Commission and the European Council is extremely worrying as we can no longer guarantee the protection of migrants and there is a high risk of vulnerable people being deported to countries where their rights are not safeguarded.

Consequently, the European Council policy for 'fast and operational returns of irregular migrants' must ensure a respect of migrants' human rights and safety, act in the respect of international laws and EU Member states must shoulder their responsibility to protect people fleeing their homes.

2. The struggle against smugglers and the control of external borders reinforced: A risk for the migrant's life

To face the flow of migrants, the European Council and the other European institutions focus on control at the external borders and deterrence against smugglers perceived as responsible for the waves of migrants in the European countries.

¹ LADDER is composed of 45 Local Authorities, Civil Society organisations and networks, originating from 35 EU and non-EU countries



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However, we believe that an over reliance and focus on deterrence and the reinforcement of external border controls fails to resolve the issue and can lead to the development of new routes which more and more dangerous for the migrants. **We reiterate the need for more safe and regular channels of migration to Europe in order to undermine the market for smugglers and ensure the increased safety of migrants.**

We also reiterate the need to concentrate on root causes of migration rather than the emphasis on border controls as a means to combat the crisis. Consequently, as it has said, the European Council should 'remain vigilant about potential developments regarding other routes' but this should happen not solely through the reinforcement of control at the external borders but through working together with origin and transit countries to ensure the protection of people on the move. Decisions taken in order to regulate flows of migrants must consider roots and motivations of migration in countries of origin.

3. New sources of Instruments of funding: A leverage for regulation of migrants at the costs of Development Aid

The Last summit of the European Council calls for the mobilisation of 'new sources and instruments of funding'. These will be put into place thanks to the European Investment Bank's initiative on the Southern Neighbourhood and Western Balkan countries and the External Investment Plan proposed by the European Commission's Communication on a new Partnership Framework with third countries. To go further with these proposals, the European Council invites the European Commission and the Council to examine these two financing plans in order to manage migration and with the final goal to stop it.

Whilst we agree on the need for the agreement to have funding in place, we must ensure that this funding does not redirect resources away from development aid towards security and border control. **The migration crisis can only be tackled with long term and increased funding to development aid and humanitarian assistance to tackle the root causes of migration at source. We disagree with the use of the development policies as a tool of leverage in order to impose flow control policies.**

Conclusions

We feel that the current position taken by the European Council entails an undermining of European fundamental principles. The LADDER consortium calls for the respect of migrants' human rights upheld by the EU and asks the EU member states to reconsider their current position in particular concerning the return of irregular migrants, the safety of the migrants on the different routes to reach and cross the European countries and to ensure a response to the migration crisis which ensures safe and secure passage for migrants fleeing conflict, (through resettlement, humanitarian admission and humanitarian visas, family reunification, worker mobility across skill levels and student visas) the respect of every human right and a further cooperation on international, national and local stages including through consultation with local government and civil society who are often at the forefront of responding and dealing with the impacts of migration at local level with little or no resources or support or access to policy making and to the migrants themselves to define a comprehensive and adequate strategy that does not undermine Development Aid or Human Rights and deals with crisis in a collaborative, transparent and open manner.



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