

EU refugee crisis requires 'total shift of thinking', say senior MEPs

Written by Manfred Weber, Knut Fleckenstein, Syed Kamall, Gabi Zimmer, Rebecca Harms and Nigel Farage on 4 September 2015 in Opinion
Opinion

MEP roundup: Manfred Weber, Knut Fleckenstein, Syed Kamall, Gabi Zimmer, Rebecca Harms and Nigel Farage comment on the refugee crisis.



Manfred Weber (DE) is chair of parliament's European People's Party group

Migration issues will, without a doubt, be one of the most widely discussed topics, not only in the upcoming parliamentary year, but also for several years to come.

We urgently need to find a common European solution; this is not only a problem for Greece or Italy, but also for all EU countries.

We need greater solidarity among member states to help share the burden of this massive influx of people, most of whom are fleeing war-torn areas in Syria and Libya.

People whose lives are at risk in their home countries are protected under international law and it is our duty to grant them protection.

However, at the same time, Europe cannot welcome everybody. We need to be very clear on the rules that apply: migrants who are not granted asylum and economic migrants should be returned to their countries. This is why we need to work more closely with the countries of origin.

We also need to step up the fight against people smugglers and stop the traffickers who are exploiting and profiting from the despair of our fellow human beings.

Knut Fleckenstein (DE) is a vice-chair of parliament's Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats group

The EU should and will focus its attention on migration and an EU asylum policy. This is and will be one of the biggest challenges for the EU. I will argue for making migration and asylum policy an absolute priority, not only for the next few months but also for the entire parliamentary year.

The summer's events have highlighted the urgent need for action, both at national and European level. We must take up this challenge. I believe Parliament has a crucial role to play.

The problem lies with the Council and the member states. Too often, they block important decisions and lack solidarity. Member states often seem disinclined to take joint action. But in view of what faces the EU, it's essential for all actors to pull together.

Syed Kamall (UK) is chair of Parliament's European Conservatives and Reformists group

The migration crisis is perhaps the most severe challenge the EU faces. While there is no easy answer, we need to distinguish between those who are seeking to move for economic reasons and those who are genuinely seeking asylum after fleeing persecution.

We cannot open our doors to everyone, therefore we need a fair system that treats people with the humanity they deserve

Whatever we do will cost money, so EU member states should consider cooperating to set up centres on the other side of the Mediterranean to process asylum applications swiftly, and stopping desperate people falling into the arms of people traffickers.

Then let us agree between member states how we can help those genuinely seeking asylum, while returning others home, where they can apply through legal migration channels.

Gabi Zimmer (DE) is chair of Parliament's European United Left/Nordic Green Left group

The EU's first priority must be the refugee crisis. Every single human being that dies trying to enter the EU is one victim too many of the murderous 'Fortress Europe'. We urgently need a common EU humanitarian asylum and immigration policy.

Rebecca Harms (DE) is co-chair of Parliament's Greens/European Free Alliance group

One of the most pressing issues for EU policymakers is the ongoing refugee crisis. Harms sees this as “a result of the shortsighted and irresponsible refusal by member states to coordinate on immigration and asylum policy.

We need a total shift of thinking, addressing the issues that force people to leave their countries of origin.

We also need to create a fair and functioning asylum system providing proper legal routes for migration and more protection for those refugees who continue to take dangerous journeys.

Nigel Farage (UK) is chair of Parliament's Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group

Frontex is either unwilling or incapable of preventing large numbers of people entering into the EU. This is placing the whole Schengen arrangement under immense pressure.

The citizens of Italy, Germany and Hungary in particular have growing concerns over the numbers of migrants that their countries can absorb without a detrimental effect on their culture, security, national infrastructure and economy.

The large influx of migrants entering into the UK through Calais, for instance, is also causing friction in Great Britain.

About the author

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