

EU RESPONSE TO MIGRATION: TURN POLITICAL CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY

BRUSSELS, 11 September 2015 - On the occasion of the extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting taking place in Brussels on 14 September, where ministers will discuss measures to address an increase in refugees and migrants crossing EU sea and land borders, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and its member organisations urge EU leaders to establish safe and regular channels for migrants and refugees to come to Europe.

2015 has seen record numbers of migrants risking their lives trying to enter Europe, leading to continuous tragedies both at sea and land borders. Yet PICUM underlines that the subsequent humanitarian crisis unfolding in many countries of Europe is the result of policies aiming to deter migrants and refugees over the past 15 years. According to the Migrant Files*, over 30,000 refugees and migrants have died since 2000 attempting to reach or stay in Europe. EU migration policies during this time period have limited and in several cases even blocked migrants from arriving in regular manners to seek protection and better living conditions.

The EU Migration Agenda**, unveiled by the European Commission in May 2015, presents no significant shift in this discourse. The security agenda prevails and human mobility continues to be seen as a threat rather than an opportunity. For nearly two decades, a security focus to migration has resulted in major efforts towards securing EU external borders, the creation and maintenance of detention facilities, and efforts to criminalise and define unwanted human mobility. Focus has also increasingly been shifted on blaming smugglers who – in the absence of official and safe channels - often offer the only possible route to Europe for migrants and refugees.

While tragedies continue to unfold on a daily basis, the lack of a realistic debate on migration will have long-term impacts on the EU. What is at stake is not only the obligation to safeguard EU values and core principles based on respect for human rights, but also the manifest need for migrant workforce in many EU countries in the coming decades. According to the OECD***, the working age population in Europe will shrink by 50 million by 2060. Already today, various sectors of the economy – particularly those in low-wage occupations - rely on the presence of migrant workforce.

Nonetheless, national and European Union migration policies offer few possibilities for migrant workers from outside the EU to receive work and residence permits. Migrants are therefore pushed into the informal labour market and into an irregular situation. The recently adopted directive on seasonal work**** has been an opportunity for EU policymakers to develop regular channels for low-wage migrant workers in one sector. This has been just one step and many more efforts will be needed in the coming years to address the unrecognised labour market needs in the EU.

Aside from immediate actions that need to be taken to stop victimisation and criminalisation of migrants and refugees who have reached Europe, there is an urgent need for strong leadership in shifting the approach to migration as a whole. Without an evidence-based reform involving not only migration but social, health and labour market policies, more lives will be lost and more suffering will be inflicted. It is painstakingly clear that the current approach the EU has taken on migration is not only failing individual migrants and refugees but our societies as a whole.

PICUM and its members will aim to hold EU governments accountable to establish a new approach, moving away from securisation and criminalising migrants towards a human rights based, social and economic perspective, including more regular channels for refugees and migrants to reach Europe safely.

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*See: [The Migrant Files](#).

**See: [A European Agenda on Migration](#).

*** See: [B. Westmore, International migration: the relationship with economic and policy factors in the home and destination country. OECD Economics Department Working Papers no. 1140, page 5.](#)

****See: [Directive 2014/36/EU](#).

About PICUM

PICUM - the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, is a non-governmental international organisation (NGO) that promotes respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe. PICUM represents 149 member organisations in 31 countries. For more information, see: www.picum.org
To watch PICUM's web documentary 'Undocumentary' showing the realities of undocumented migrant workers, click [here](#). To watch the video animation "Migration is not a Crime", click [here](#).

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PICUM members include:

Austria: Diakonie - Evangelischer Flüchtlingsdienst Österreich; **Belgium:** Abraço, Bond Zonder Naam, CIRE, CSC Brussels, Filipiniana-Europa, de8 , Le Monde des Possibles , Medimmigrant, Meeting, OMANIAE, ORBIT, OR.C.A, Platform Kinderen op de vlucht - Plate-forme Mineurs en exil, Point d'Appui, Protestant Sociaal Centrum, Raiz Mirim, Samahan - Filipino Migrant Workers Union in Belgium, Verenigde Protestantse Kerk in België, VLOS; **Croatia:** Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace; **Cyprus:** KISA; **Czech Republic:** Association for Integration and Migration, Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations in the Czech Republic, La Strada Czech Republic, People in Need; **Denmark:** Babaylan Denmark, Refugees Welcome; **Estonia:** Legal Information Centre for Human Rights; **Finland:** Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; **France:** Centre Enfants du Monde, Femmes de la Terre, GISTI, RESF; **Georgia:** International Youth Association TIP; **Germany:** Agisra , BAG Asyl in der Kirche, Ban Ying, Europäisches Bürgerforum in der BRD, Flüchtlingsrat Nordrhein Westfalen, Förderverein Niedersächsischer Flüchtlingsrat e.V., IG Metall-Vorstand, Maisha e.V. African Women in Germany, Medibüro Kiel e.V. , Medinetz Bremen; **Greece:** AITIMA, Asante NGO, Generation 2.0, Greek Forum of Refugees; **Ireland:** Immigrant Advice Bureau, Immigrant Council of Ireland, MRCI, Ruhama; **Israel:** The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, Kav LaOved; **Italy:** ASGI, CESVI, DIFFERENZA DONNA, NAGA, SIMM; **Kazakhstan:** Sana Sezim, Women Support Centre; **Luxemburg:** ASTI; **Malta:** Aditus, Jesuit Refugee Service Malta; **Morocco:** Organisation Démocratique de Travail, Réseau Marocain Transnational Migration Développement; **Nepal:** Friendship-Nepal; **Netherlands:** ASKV, Dokters van de Wereld, EMFA, FairWork, Het Wereldhuis, IMWU, Kerk in Actie, OKIA, PHAROS, Stichting Agnes van Leeuwenberch, Stichting INLIA, Stichting LOS, Stichting Mamre, Stichting OMZO-Pauluskerk, Stichting Ros, STIL; **Nigeria:** CAFSO-WRAG for Development, Centre for Youths Integrated Development; **Norway:** Antirasistisk Senter, Helsehjelp til papirløse, Health center for undocumented migrants; **Pakistan:** Community Development Foundation; **Poland:** Association for Legal Intervention ; **Portugal:** Association for the Rights of Undocumented Migrants, Jesuit Refugee Service Portugal, APAV Portugal, PROSAUDESC; **Romania:** The Foundation for an Open Society; **Spain:** ACCEM, Asociación A.P.A.V.; APDHA, Asociación para la Protección e Integración de la Mujer, Asociación POR TI MUJER, Caritas Diocesana de Barcelona, Centro de Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos Pro Igual, Centro Pueblos Unidos, Federación Andalucía Acoge, Federación de Asociaciones de SOS Racismo, Federación Red Acoge, Justicia y Paz, Comisión General de España, Movimiento Canario por la Paz, Red Aminvi, Salud y Familia; **Sweden:** Caritas Sverige, Immigrant-Institute, Trade Union Center for Undocumented Migrants, Rosengrenska; **Switzerland:** Association Promotion Droits Humains, Associazione Movimento dei Senza Voce, Berner Beratungsstelle für Sans-papiers, Centre de contact Suisses-immigrés, Collectif de soutien aux sans-papiers de Genève, FIZ, Sans-papiers Anlaufstelle Zürich, SIT, Solidaritätsnetz Sans-Papiers Bern; **United Kingdom:** Anti-Slavery International, Campaign to Close Campsfield, Coram Children's Legal Centre, FEMAGE WORLD, Hackney Migrant Centre, Immigration Advice Service, JCWI, LAWRS, Maternity Action, MRN, Migrant Voice, Praxis, STEP, The Detention Forum; **European and International Organisations:** European AIDS Treatment Group, European Federation of the Community of Sant'Egidio, ENoMW, ICMC, Jesuit Refugee Service Europe, La Strada International, Médecins du Monde International Network, Pax Christi International, SMES-Europa, UNITED for Intercultural Action.