

New borders and migration policy for EU

The Home Secretary has announced that she plans legislation in the UK to ensure more people traffickers can be caught or prevented from exploiting people by taking money to help them break the law. She also has made clear that this legislation will also allow the removal of illegals who do not qualify for asylum in a timely way, after their case has been considered.

Meanwhile the EU is acknowledging that its migration policy “no longer works”. The Commission has set out how Member states reject 370,000 asylum claims a year, but only return one third of these people to the states they came from. It chronicles how there were 1.8 million illegal crossings of the EU border in 2015, falling to 142,000 last year. It proposes a changed law to replace the Dublin convention, which states that each asylum seeker should apply for asylum in the first member state they enter. This has widely been seen as unfair on Italy, Spain and Greece who receive the bulk of the illegal arrivals and the asylum seekers.

The new scheme they want will entail a common migration policy with a solidarity requirement that all Member states contribute to housing those who qualify to stay, and help secure the return of those who do not. “The new Solidarity mechanism will primarily focus on relocation or return sponsorship. Member states would supply all necessary support to the Member State under pressure to swiftly return those who have no right to stay, with the supporting Member State taking full responsibility if return is not carried out within a set period. Member states can concentrate on nationalities where they see a better chance of effecting returns.”

The EU has very long borders, with difficult policing problems. They also now have substantial areas that are fenced to try to close off land routes. They propose the appointment of a senior person as Return Co-ordinator and a “High Level Network for returns”. Frontex, their border force, is to be expanded to “a standing corps with a capacity of 10,000 staff ” which “remains essential”. All illegals seeking to enter will be “health checked, finger printed and registered on the Eurodac database.

It is interesting to see how the EU is now trying to exert control over illegal migrants, and reminds us it is a much more difficult problem for the EU with massive borders including land borders, than for the islands of the UK.