

Press release – Migration and asylum: time to find balance between solidarity and responsibility



At the opening of the High-level Inter-parliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe organised by the European Parliament, EP President David Sassoli stressed that “behind migration figures there are people , each one with their own story”, adding that “they need to be at the heart of any efficient European policy on migration and asylum”.

President Sassoli referred to the recent tragedy off the coast of Libya in which a six-month-old baby from Guinea lost his life after a shipwreck. He also emphasised that Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Maltese borders are, in fact, European borders: i.e. a shared responsibility for the whole Union.

EC President Ursula von der Leyen also acknowledged that “far too many people are risking their lives to come to Europe” and highlighted the great contribution that migrants often make to their hosting communities – citing the German-Turkish couple behind the Pzifer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as an example. The new Pact on Asylum and Migration aims to balance the need to welcome refugees, fight smugglers, and ensure integration and appropriate treatment for everyone, including those who cannot remain in Europe, she explained.

Wolfgang Schäuble, Chair of the German Bundestag, admitted that there are no easy nor optimal solutions to this conundrum. “We must fulfil our humanitarian obligations, and saving lives at sea is a legal obligation”, he said, but sometimes we also have to cooperate with dubious regimes. He warned that cynical smugglers use EU ideals to their benefit, so “we need to show we are capable of returning people in order to not create false incentives”.

The Speakers of the Portuguese and Slovenian parliaments, Eduardo Ferro

Rodrigues and Igor Zorčič, also took part in the opening of the conference, since these two countries form together with Germany the trio of EU presidencies of the Council.

Ferro Rodrigues noted that migration is a global phenomenon to which the EU must respond based on its founding values. "There is a lot of work to be done in the years ahead" on the basis of a new European Pact, he added. Zorčič agreed that the current asylum system has shown too many weaknesses in recent years and hoped the EU will be able to create an efficient common framework, taking into account each member state's situation.

You can watch the [recording of the opening session](#), and [follow live, or recorded](#), the rest of the sessions.

Find here the [full programme](#) of the event. Debates will focus on the relationship between solidarity and responsibility in migration and asylum management, the external dimension, shaping partnerships with third countries, and legal migration and integration.