**The external dimension of migration needs to be anchored in the EU's foreign policy**

**Building talent partnerships with countries of origin and transit is a key policy in addressing migration. Europe has to shift the focus of migration policy's external dimension and make it part of a broader geopolitical and geo-economic agenda that will be given its rightful place other policies. Otherwise, the new pact will be too weak to deal with the rising numbers of migration flows.**

The EESC's External Relations Section (REX) held a hybrid meeting in July 2021 to look into the geopolitics of migration, with the participation of distinguished speakers from the European institutions, civil society organisations and African stakeholders.

"*Today we are talking about how geopolitics touch upon migration. If we see what has happened in the Sahel countries, it is clear that the next big wave of migrants to Europe will be coming from Africa*" underlined **Dimitris Dimitriadis**, president of the REX section, in his opening remarks.

Facts speak for themselves when 281 million people internationally are estimated to be migrants. As of January 2020, an estimated 23 million people of the 447 million living in the EU are third-country nationals, representing 5% of the European population. In total, nine million third-country nationals are employed in the EU labour market in critical sectors and occupations.

In this regard, **Davinia Wood** from the Commission's DG for Migration and Home Affairs, emphasised that "*Demographics in Europe tell us that we need to change the narrative of migration to a positive one*" and added that "*Despite the difficult aspects of legislative proposals and procedures, there is consensus on the external part and on cooperation with third countries*".

Even though the new pact on migration and asylum is still advocating talent partnerships with the countries of origin, transit and destination, it seems that there are blockages preventing its effective implementation.

**Jean-Louis De Brower** from the European Affairs programme at the Egmont Institute commented that there is probably a lack of trust in and solidarity with the new pact. "*Even today, the external dimension of EU migration policy is perceived as an externalisation of policy responsibility or burden shifting, instead of responsibility and burden sharing*".

Along the same lines, **Estrella Gallan,** representing the Spanish Commission *Ayuda al Refugiado* [Help the Refugee], pointed out that the issues of migration and asylum fall on the shoulders of the countries of entry, and should be dealt with in a more proportionate manner, based on shared responsibility and solidarity. Data presented by Ms Gallan showed that, after Italy, Spain has become the second most popular country of entry via the sea for people coming from North Africa and Latin America.

**Ola Henrikson**, regional director of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) also highlighted the concept of partnership as an important element in migration discussions, fostering cross-regional cooperation in the area of labour migration and building stronger relations with third countries.

**Development policy in Africa can put a stop to illegal migration**

A positive contribution to development in Africa, which is vulnerable to climate change, could bring social, political and economic stability.

In the words of MEP **Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana**, 1st vice-chair of the Committee on Development, "*Development policies are inextricably linked to migration. The EU has an influence on Sahara countries focused on fighting terrorism and managing migration flows. However, it is important for the EU to change its perspective and seek ways of applying principles without leaving anyone behind, to achieve the SD Agenda 2030 objectives*”.

Adding to that, **Dr Chiyoge B. Sifa**, regional director of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) Africa, underscored the importance of the ICA-EU partnership and the multilateral programmes under the EU funds, which play a significant role in discouraging young people from taking the Mediterranean routes. As she said, “*Africa is the youngest continent, a blessing and a problem if not well managed*” and explained that young African people invested a lot in immigrating to Europe, if they could not find a better future for themselves in Africa.

Promoting regional stability in Africa and building the momentum for regional integration are key policies that need to be taken on board. **Joseph Bikanda**, representing the Pan-African Human rights Defenders Network, stated that a negotiated political roadmap with local authorities and government, in which the interest of all sectors of society were protected remained the most viable and sustainable way forward.

Finally, **Giacomo Durazzo**, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Mauritania, stressed the significance of combating trafficking, a highly profitable business pattern, sometimes backed by political authorities, which is deeply rooted in the African region.

Establishing strong partnerships between countries of origin and transit that lack migration governance is a key policy for addressing trafficking. Mr Durazzo also indicated the need to invest in cooperation programmes focused on young people, promoting employment opportunities. He referred to Mauritania as a role model and the exemplary cooperation with local authorities, who had successfully managed to confront trafficking networks and smugglers.

Last but not least, the structure of civil society in the continent has to be reinforced, as it is neither properly integrated in Africa nor in Europe. The role of civil society is a key element, which should be taken into account when designing EU agreements with Africa.