**Instrumentalisation of migrants and the Ukraine refugee crisis call for a fresh start to migration policy**

**The state-sponsored instrumentalisation of migrants, aimed at destabilising the EU, and the current war in Ukraine, resulting in an unprecedented influx of refugees, call for a review of European migration policy. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) insists that solidarity and burden-sharing among Member States are needed for a common response to refugee crises. At the same time, the EESC highlights the need to guarantee migrants' safety and human rights.**

In its opinion on [***Instrumentalisation of migrants***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/instrumentalisation-migrants), adopted at the EESC's June plenary, the members emphasised that the EU's response to the instrumentalisation of migrants should be based on a common, shared and coherent migration policy.

The upcoming and much hoped-for specific regulation in this field should provide a solidarity-based form of responsibility-sharing between the Member States and include swift relocation procedures.

The migration crisis at the EU’s external border with Belarus was not the first case of its kind; other state strategies have previously sought to instrumentalise migratory movements, such as the similar abuses carried out by Turkey at the EU border with Greece and by Morocco at the Spanish and Italian borders.

Especially now, with the war being waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, causing a massive influx of refugees, it has become clear that migration impacts all Member States. In this context, the new Pact on Migration and Asylum should be redesigned in order to bring about the systemic change necessary to develop a rational, rights-based EU asylum and migration policy.

To this end, EESC member and rapporteur of the opinion, **Stefano Palmieri,** underlined the need for the EU to deliver a sustainable migration and asylum strategy based on respect for human rights, transparency and cooperation: *"The EU and its Member States had not been effective in responding to the instrumentalisation of migrants, while they were in the case of Belarus: it is now necessary to continue working towards consolidating Europe's reputation as a place able to provide humanitarian aid and guarantee compliance with human rights"*.

**Ensuring the protection of instrumentalised migrants**

Regarding "hybrid threats" deployed by third countries to test the EU's unity, **Pietro Vittorio Barbieri**, EESC member and co-rapporteur of the opinion, remarked that human beings are not the threat but rather the victims of such tactics. *"The "threats" refer to a situation of geopolitical instability on the EU's borders, not to the people being trafficked".*

The migrants involved are highly vulnerable and in need of protection. Humanitarian assistance offered to migrants by the Member States has to meet the standards required under EU law, complying with established practices for supporting vulnerable individuals.

In this respect, the EESC strongly recommends that fair, full and immediate recognition of the rights of instrumentalised migrants should be given, avoiding grey areas or situations of administrative uncertainty.

A holistic and cohesive migration system, based on a spirit of solidarity among Member States can prevent future attempts and weaken the threats to the security and stability of the Union.