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**Migration: European Solidarity Stress Test**

"*What’s at stake today is solidarity: towards migrants, between Member States but also with third countries. Let’s not forget that some countries in the Mediterranean host more refugees than European Member States have ever done*”, said **Henri Malosse, EESC President**, in his welcome address to **Dimitris Avramopoulos**, **Commissioner** in charge of Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship at the EESC Plenary today. He added: “*Faced with daily human tragedies, failure is not an option. The European Commission can count on the EESC to support its action, with civil society in the field. Concretely, EESC will be working with NGOs to help set up welcome centres across the Mediterranean. The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission stand as firm partners there*.”

“*I need the support of the EESC, which has always been at the forefront of solidarity in our common house: Europe*” acknowledged **Commissioner Avramopoulos**. “*While we are living at a time of instability and Europe is seen as a refuge, it was high time for the European Commission to fulfil its role by taking action on the challenge of migration*. *And so we did by putting forward the* [*European Agenda on Migration*](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf).”

Commissioner Avramopoulos explained that this agenda is not the one of the European Commission, but it is an agenda for the whole Europe. Recalling the [first European Migration Forum](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-european-migration-forum-1), jointly held by the EESC and the Commission on 26-27 January 2015, he welcomed the engagement of organised civil society.

He then presented the European Agenda on Migration and the first implementing measures announced yesterday, such as the relocation and resettlement schemes and the action plan to fight migrant smugglers. On the proposed relocation scheme, Commissioner Avramopoulos added: “*We believe it is a fair scheme, based on objective and quantifiable criteria. We propose a fair distribution of migrants in need of international protection: not the relocation of irregular migrants*".

During the debate with EESC Members, many voices raise to encourage the Commission to pursue its work to shape a common migration policy, a move that had been repeatedly called by the EESC over the past years. The Dublin Regulation was pointed out for lacking effectiveness and completely overlooking the human dimension of the migration policy. European values and fundamental rights should be at the core of a new common migration policy. The need for more Europe, not less, in this field was highlighted.

**Luis Miguel Pariza Castaños**, Member of the Permanent Study Group on Immigration and Integration in the EESC, welcomed the Commission plan, saying that “*for years, the EESC has been calling for a proper and common policy on migration. We have finally been heard, but Europe can be more ambitious and go much further. For instance on the relocation programme: why only people fleeing Syria and Eritrea? Why only those? And why only 40 000 people?*”

Concluding the discussion, Commissioner Avramopoulos stated: “*In 5 months, we shaped a new European migration policy. Solidarity is at the heart of this policy."*

**EARLIER TODAY ON DIALOGUE WITH SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURS**

In the presence of Federica Mogherini, EU's High Representative, EESC President Henri Malosse opened the [2nd Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.news.35803), jointly organised by the EESC, the European Commission, the European External Action Service and the Committee of the Regions. In his speech, the President warned that Europe has already lost 10 years in this area and "*that we now have to structure and strengthen our dialogue with our Southern Neighbours. We share one region, one sea, and we have to work together on equal footing. Having trade together is not enough, but we need cooperation in migration, terrorism, youth unemployment, gender equality, environmental degradation and many others. Investment in civil society is sustainable investment*." The EESC has been making the bridge over the Mediterranean Sea over the last 10 years and offers these structures to build on together. For the High Representative, it is important not to be divided between the institutions but "*to serve together our people*".

**Background**

* [EESC statement on the situation in the Mediterranean](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.35465) (23/04/2015)
* [EESC press release – First European Migration Forum: the human face of migration](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.34562) (28/01/2015)
* [Immigration and integration: Where civil society makes the difference](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/eesc_12_67_en.pdf) (2012)
* [EESC opinion on respect for fundamental rights in European policies and legislation on immigration](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.14358) (04/11/2009)

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*The European Economic and Social Committee represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process. The Committee has 353 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union.*

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