

2015-31

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATIONS: A GLOBAL ISSUE

The “migrant crisis” at the heart of current affairs in Europe should not distort the overall reality: according to UN figures, international migrations involved 232 million people in 2013, which represents hardly more than 3% of the world population and around 9% of that of developed countries.

• At the international level, several significant changes have occurred over the last thirty years:

- the increase in the number of migration factors (flight from poverty and conflict zones, the search for employment and better living conditions, environmental displacement, etc.);
 - the regionalisation of migratory flows (South/South flows henceforth being equivalent to the traditional South/North flows);
 - the traditional distinctions drawn between countries of departure, transit and reception appearing to be becoming less marked;
 - the permeability of different categories of migrants (asylum-seekers, migrant workers, family reunification migrants, students, etc.).
- Migrations in France, for their part, – with the exception of French overseas territories,

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some of which, such as French Guiana and Mayotte, are particularly exposed – are frequently overestimated: according to the latest figures from the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE, figures at 1st January 2014), France has 8.9% immigrants (persons born with foreign nationality abroad, including those having acquired French nationality), including 6.4% foreigners (not having acquired French

nationality). The country is not a major country of immigration and occupies only 5th place in Europe in this respect.

- The European Union (EU) is in a unique situation, since it comprises the sole existing area of free movement of people, the Schengen Area. While internal borders are abolished, each country is responsible for surveillance of the Schengen Area’s external borders located on its territory. The European Union’s migration policy, which is still in its embryonic stages, remains under the shared authority of the Commission and the Member States. Although major progress has been made in numerous domains, in particular with the adoption of the Common European Asylum System in 2012 and the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015, the recent migrant crisis has revealed the difficulties of implementation of a common migration policy.



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ESEC PROPOSALS AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- The actions of the various international bodies in charge of migration issues (UN, UNHCR, ILO, IOM, etc.) should be governed by two common objectives: defence of human rights and support of good governance in developing countries.
- The ESEC calls for wider ratification of the international conventions in favour of protection of migrants and refugees' rights and, above all, the implementation thereof, via the introduction of effective supervisory and control mechanisms.
- The ESEC is in favour of the establishment of bilateral and multilateral agreements, since it considers the "regional" format (agreements entered into between large geographical subgroups) to be a particularly appropriate way of approaching the migration issue.
- The ESEC reasserts, as it has in its previous opinions, its belief that tackling poverty and inequality constitutes one of the keys to fighting against forced migrations.
- The ESEC confirms its commitment to the threshold, fixed in 1970, of 0.7% of national disposable income (NDI) being devoted to official development assistance (ODA) and to a share of this aid being allocated to migrants' associations, as part of a co-development approach.
- The ESEC believes that the awarding of this financial support should give rise to a contractual relationship with the beneficiary countries; in this regard, restoration or promotion of the rule of law, good governance and the fight against corruption and tax evasion constitute priorities.

ESEC PROPOSALS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

- The ESEC calls for the implementation of Article 78.3 of the TFEU whenever migratory crises occur: it is vital that Member States demonstrate solidarity with one another and not leave a particularly exposed frontline country to manage the sudden arrival of migrants at its borders alone.
- The ESEC supports all cooperative initiatives already established or to be developed, with a constant concern for strict respect for human rights and with a view to making them into real opportunities for increasing the pooling of (North/South and South/North) cross-experience and expertise and for mobilising diasporas' skills to the benefit of their countries of origin.
- The ESEC also considers that the representative bodies of civil society at the European level (in particular national ESCs and the European ESC) have a pertinent role to play within the framework of cooperation on migration issues.
- As envisaged by the European Commission for 2016, the ESEC considers adaptation of the "Dublin System" to be urgent, making it more flexible, notably in order to enable asylum seekers to make applications in countries other than their initial country of reception.
- The ESEC considers the resizing of Frontex to be necessary in order to take into account the humanitarian aspect of the handling of migration crises.
- Within the framework of the joint management of borders, the ESEC recommends a determined fight against criminal smuggling networks, whose activities resemble human trafficking, while protecting the rights of the migrants themselves. The EU has equipped itself with a full legal mechanism for cracking down on criminal smuggling networks' activities.
- As far as the reception of migrants is concerned, the ESEC draws attention to potential abuses with regard to so-called "hotspot" detention centres, of which the opening is planned in initial countries of reception. Without adequate supervision or resources, these could more closely resemble migrant sorting centres than decent places for the reception and taking charge of migrants.
- The ESEC is in favour of putting in place a European system of border guards on their own initiative, based upon pooling of resources and coordination of practices.
- As far as the "Return Directive" (2008/115/EC) is concerned, our Assembly declares that the Member States should respect the spirit and letter thereof in its implementation, in accordance with the strict respect for human rights which should prevail in this regard. In the ESEC's view, the putting in place of accompaniment measures is an essential condition, ensuring that the "return" of migrants takes place in a decent manner.