

Refugee crisis must be first priority, says Juncker in 2015 State of the Union debate

"The first priority today is and must be tackling the refugee crisis," said European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker during the 2015 State of the Union debate at the European Parliament on Wednesday 9 September. "The EU is facing migration, the economic crisis and wars in its neighbourhood. We have to contribute to a solution to these challenges," said EP President Martin Schulz, EP's President in his opening remarks.

"I give you the floor to present proposals for the European Union, here in the European Parliament, house of European democracy," **Schulz** told Juncker.

"The first priority today is and must be tackling the refugee crisis," said **Juncker**. "It's a matter of humanity and human dignity and for Europe a matter of historical fairness. We are fighting against the Islamic state, why are we not ready to accept people who run away from that conflict?". Turning to the crisis, Juncker said: "It was absolutely necessary for us to say that Grexit was not an option, if we hadn't said that loudly and clearly, Grexit could have happened. It was a possibility, but not an option." Speaking about the European Union, Juncker said: "the crisis is of course not finished," adding that the crisis "will only be over where there is full employment in Europe". "I know how weak the European continent would be if the EU didn't exist." Juncker also added: "I would like to pay tribute to other countries such as Ireland, Portugal, Spain which have proven that if good reforms are implemented, they bring about the right results".

Manfred Weber (EPP, Germany) asked everyone to "remember these are human beings that we are talking about". He added that the problem is "not Europe, not Brussels but national egoism". On Greece Weber said: "Tsipras got respect for having changed course. Greece is no longer a place without a future. Tsipras has showed that the left ideology on this continent has failed."

Gianni Pittella (S&D, Italy) urged the Commission to tackle social dumping and zero hour contracts. On migration, he said: "We have to welcome the refugees, otherwise Europe doesn't exist as a concept, as a union set up in solidarity."

Syed Kamall (ECR, UK) said: "Let's find solutions together, not only the EU. This is an international crisis that needs an international response." He added: "We need to tackle these problems in realistic ways, the time to point fingers is over. Europe does not need a new iron

curtain, Europe needs an iron will to discuss together, work together and find a solution together."

Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, Belgium) said about the refugee crisis: "the heart of the problem is the lack of political will and the lack of unity. This is not a crisis of Europe, this is in fact a crisis because of the lack of Europe."

Gabi Zimmer (GUE/NGL, Germany) said: "We mustn't allow the head of governments to pursue nationalist and small minded policies or EU will be destroyed." She also asked Juncker about social priorities: "You didn't say anything about the social priorities."

Philippe Lamberts (Greens/EFA, Belgium) said: " We need to stand up for refugees and be open to change and to the future. We need to build alliances and be able to recreate what Europe has lost."

Nigel Farage (EFDD, UK) said that Juncker got the migration issue wrong. "As we know, the majority of people coming are economic migrants. In addition, we see evidence that ISIS are now using this route to put their jihadists on European soil. We must be mad to take this risk for our societies."

Florian Philippot (ENF, France) said Europe had put no pressure on Gulf States to accept refugees. He added: "Big business wants the illegals in."

Krisztina Morvai, a non-attached member from Hungary, said: "We all have the same dream, to live in our homeland, to work for our homeland, in peace, to keep our roots, our cultures, traditions."

Nicolas Schmit, speaking on behalf of the Council presidency, said: "This is a historic moment. Europe has to face a major crisis. I can say that in the Council will do everything we could in order to put into place the new proposals [for a permanent mechanism to relocate migrants] presented today by president Juncker."

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Jean-Claude Juncker during the State of the EU debate

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MEPs

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21	17	21	13	96	6	11	21	54	74	11	73	6	8	11	6	21	6	26	18	51	21	32	8	13	13	20	73
BELGIUM	BULGARIA	CZECH REPUBLIC	DENMARK	GERMANY	ESTONIA	IRELAND	GREECE	SPAIN	FRANCE	CROATIA	ITALY	CYPRUS	LATVIA	LITHUANIA	LUXEMBOURG	HUNGARY	MALTA	NETHERLANDS	AUSTRIA	POLAND	PORTUGAL	ROMANIA	SLOVENIA	SLOVAKIA	FINLAND	SWEDEN	UNITED KINGDOM



European Commission

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Council of the European Union

Government ministers who share budgetary and legislative power with European Parliament.

European Council

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Strategic body that decides the EU's political direction.



Source:
European Parliament