
Migration and asylum policy: “It’s an incredible scandal”

MEPs roundly criticised the failure of EU leaders to come up with solutions to the EU's migration problem during a debate on 3 July.

They discussed the results of the 28-29 June summit on migration and asylum policy with Council President [Donald Tusk](#) and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

Tusk outlined the agreement by EU leaders to accept, as part of a compromise deal on migration, proposals for disembarkation platforms outside Europe, a dedicated budgetary tool in the EU's next long-term budget to combat illegal migration and more EU support for the Libyan coast guard, as well as a Franco-Italian proposal for controlled centres on EU territory and increased development funding for Africa.

MEPs weren't impressed. “We lose lives every day each and every week in the Mediterranean. Each life is one life too much to lose. It is an incredible scandal that we don't get our act together,” said German S&D member [Udo Bullmann](#). “I am not satisfied with the result of this Council.”

Italian ECR member [Raffaele Fitto](#) agreed: “The true problem is the fact that we are incapable of finding a solution to this problem. When it comes to the overall agreement on migration all of what's being said it's just far too generic.”

However, [Manfred Weber](#) (EPP, Germany) welcomed the progress that had been made. “Mr Juncker asked whether the glass is half-empty or half-full. After the last Council we had an empty glass and now I'm happy to see something in there.”

Italian GUE/NGL member [Curzio Maltese](#) criticised the summit as “a piece of theatre that is not about finding solutions but about cheap and easy votes by using the discourse based on hatred and on fear”. He added: “President Tusk has said that EU is not going to abandon Africa. It already has. I would like to know where we have addressed the causes behind mass migration.”

Juncker emphasised the need for the EU to work with North African countries to establish reception centres. “We need to make sure we are not giving the impression of a neo-colonial attitude. It’s not up to us to decide about Africa. We should decide with Africa.”

The Commission President said he was disappointed that there was no agreement on legislation proposed by the Commission. “We should be hurrying rather than slowing down. We need to move forward, instead of holding ourselves back.”

Parliament has been waiting since November 2017 for EU countries to agree their position on the reform of the [Dublin rules](#), key for the overhaul of the [European asylum system](#), so inter-institutional negotiations can begin. MEPs have [repeatedly called](#) on the Council to show real political will to reform the asylum legislation and put an end to the death of migrants trying to reach Europe. In the first six months of 2018 alone, [45,000 people](#) risked their lives in the Mediterranean.

“Have you agreed on a new asylum system?” asked [Guy Verhofstadt](#) (ALDE, Belgium). “Where is the position of the Council? We have had our position since November and we are waiting for the position of the Council! There is not even a word on this. ‘We are going to work further on this’ is all you can read in the conclusions.”

[Ska Keller](#) (Greens/EFA, DE) also criticised the summit for not reaching an agreement on the reform of the asylum system and came out strongly against the proposed disembarkation platform. “You will just put them away, the refugees, somewhere in the camps in the Sahara and that’s the end of it. If this is being implemented, it is basically the end of the right to ask for the asylum here in Europe.”

Some MEPs said that the summit represented a shift on migration.

[Nigel Farage](#) (EFDD, UK) noted that Italy threatened to use its veto unless it got what it wanted on migration and that the agreement on regional distribution centres fell apart in a few hours.

The compromise at the summit “puts an end to compulsory quotas and insists on strengthening external borders. That’s a defeat for the Brussels commissioners and the Macron-Merkel couple,” according to French ENF member [Nicolas Bay](#).

[Watch the plenary session live here.](#)



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