The EU response to the migrant challenge

Greece’s Hellenic Coast Guard approaches a boat containing 43 Syrian refugees in the Mediterranean sea © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

The migration crisis has exposed shortcomings in Europe’s asylum system, compelling the EU into action. Learn about Parliament’s response to the crisis.

In 2015 there were 1.83 million illegal crossings at the EU’s external borders. While this number fell to 150,114 in 2018, Parliament has a number of proposals to remedy shortcomings in the EU’s asylum policy: from reforming the asylum system to strengthening border security and promoting the integration of refugees.

Read our facts and figures about asylum and migration in the EU.
Reinforcing the asylum system and sharing responsibility between EU countries

At the heart of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is the Dublin regulation, which determines the country responsible for processing each asylum claim - generally the first EU country the applicant has entered. The Dublin system resulted in border countries like Italy and Greece bearing the brunt of the migration crisis.

In November 2017, MEPs adopted a mandate for negotiations with EU governments on an overhaul of the Dublin rules. However, national governments have been unable to reach a position on the proposals so talks have yet to begin between Parliament and the Council. Learn more about Parliament's suggestions for a new Dublin regulation.

As well as a reform of the Dublin system, the European Parliament has been working to tighten border controls and improve the ability of member states to track people entering Europe.

During Parliament’s last legislative term, MEPs also worked on clear Europe-wide rules for distinguishing regular migrants from refugees, to ensure fair and equal treatment of asylum-seekers, and make sure that every member state contributes its fair share to solving the problem (for example by participating in the relocation of refugees).

Read our page on reinforcing the Common European Asylum System.

Securing EU external borders and managing migration flows

The refugee influx put enormous pressure on national border authorities. Parliament called for a strengthening of the EU border agency Frontex, and in December 2015, the European Commission put forward a proposal for a new European Border and Coast Guard with the aim of reinforcing the management and security of the EU's external borders and supporting national border guards.
The new agency was launched in October 2016. There are plans to give the agency a standing corps of 10,000 border guards by 2027.

Members have also backed a proposal to strengthen the current European Asylum Support Office (EASO) that will become the EU Agency for Asylum. The Agency would facilitate the functioning of the Common European Asylum System and help ensure convergence in the assessment of asylum applications across the EU. Learn more about the proposals and Parliament’s position.

In a vote in November 2018, Parliament backed a substantial increase in funding for migration and border management over the period 2021-2027 compared to the 2014-2020 budget.

*Read our page on EU border control and the management of migrants.*

**Fostering refugees’ integration in Europe**

The EU is also taking steps to help migrants integrate into societies in their new home countries. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, set up for the period 2014-2020 with a total of €3.137 billion, promotes the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation and strengthening of a common EU approach to asylum and immigration.

Parliament is also proactive and has called for more funding for programmes to create new opportunities such as jobs and education for vulnerable groups and refugees in particular.

*Read our page on the integration of refugees in Europe.*