

New Migration Pact proposal gets mixed reactions from MEPs



Thousands of refugees from the fire-gutted Moria camp on Lesbos are moved to a new tent city nearby ©Στράτος Μπιλάκης/Adobe Stock

Civil liberties committee members questioned how the new Asylum and Migration Pact proposed by the European Commission would function during a debate on 24 September.

Members of Parliament's [civil liberties, justice and home affairs committee](#) discussed the [new plan for an Asylum and Migration Pact](#) a day after it has been presented by the Commission. on 24 September. The aim of the proposal, presented is to change and improve current procedures by ensuring shared responsibility and solidarity. However, [committee members voiced mixed reactions](#), wondering if it will bring about real change.

During the debate with Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson, MEPs requested more concrete information about how the pact would be applied on the ground and enforced. Some considered the initiative to be a positive step to help EU countries where most of the asylum seekers first arrive, while others described it as the only way forward from the current situation.

[Read more about the EU response to the migrant challenge](#)

However, MEPs also questioned whether the new rules will prevent another humanitarian disaster such as the [recent fire in the Moria refugee camp](#) and wondered whether the new screening and border procedures would respect fundamental rights. Several MEPs regretted that the principle of the [current Dublin regulation](#) - requiring the country of first entry to handle asylum claims - remains in the new regulation proposal, because they were worried this will maintain the burden on countries where most of the asylum seekers first arrive.

The Commission's proposal avoids compulsory relocation quotas, which proved so controversial in the previous proposal. EU countries can choose to take in (relocate) asylum applicants or commit to returning irregular migrants (sponsor returns) from another EU country. MEPs were concerned that this flexibility could lead to a situation where many EU countries choose to sponsor returns instead of taking in applicants and raised questions about the enforcement mechanisms and the effective cooperation with third countries. Some MEPs demanded the mandatory relocation of refugees, while others wanted a firmer stance on irregular arrivals.

Main pillars of the Commission's proposal for a new Migration and Asylum Pact:

- **More efficient and faster procedures**, including
 - Pre-entry screening covering identification, health and security checks, fingerprinting and registration in the Eurodac database (for fingerprints)
 - A faster asylum border procedure for those with little chance to be granted asylum
 - Independent monitoring mechanism to ensure respect of fundamental rights
- **EU countries are allowed to choose how to show solidarity**
 - EU countries can accept asylum seekers to their territory (=relocation), take over responsibility for returns of rejected asylum seekers (= sponsor returns) or, in specific cases, provide operational support
 - EU countries will be legally required to contribute based on their gross domestic product and population size and their solidarity contribution will vary depending on whether it's a scenario of rescue operations at sea, a situation of pressure or an acute crisis
- **A common EU system for returns**
 - Working with non-EU countries to address shared challenges such as migrant smuggling and building legal migration pathways
 - A more effective legal framework
 - A stronger role of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency
 - A newly appointed EU Return Coordinator

Action Plan on integration and inclusion for 2021-2024

- **New Asylum and Migration Management Regulation** replacing the Dublin regulation

Find out more about the [EU's migration policy during Parliament's previous legislative term](#)

Next steps

Parliament and the Council need to approve the legislation to make a common EU asylum and migration policy a reality.

Read more about migration

- Exploring the causes of migration
- Facts and figures about asylum and migration in the EU

Find out more

[Watch the committee debate](#)

[Q&A: Asylum and Migration Pact](#)

[European Commission press release](#)

[At a glance: the need for solidarity in EU asylum policy](#)