

## GUE/NGL priorities in the area of migration and asylum:

- Drawing up a consistent, all-encompassing strategy for legal migration and abandoning the single policy of closure pursued to date;
- Ensuring equal treatment in terms of economic, cultural and social rights and recognising civic and political rights, including voting rights and political participation;
- Fighting the expansion of 'fortress Europe': GUE/NGL opposes the externalisation of EU borders through cooperation with third countries, the conclusion of readmission agreements, the development of border surveillance technologies and the detention of migrants;
- Working towards a Common European Asylum System that ensures all men, women and children who seek asylum across Europe benefit from a fair, humane and high standard of treatment;
- Working for more solidarity with refugees: GUE/NGL supports resettlement policies and opposes the Dublin Regulation that makes the first country of entry the responsible member state for the examination of an asylum application;
- Fighting against the criminalisation of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees: GUE/NGL is against the use of any terminology or regulation that implies that migrants are criminals, including the new EURODAC Regulation that gives law enforcement authorities access to asylum seekers and refugees' fingerprints.

## GUE/NGL members of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs



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# For a respectful and responsible migration policy



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## Respect for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers' rights

People fleeing persecution have always sought safety and opportunities for a better life by crossing borders throughout the world. According to the UN, there are 214 million migrants worldwide who account for 3% of the world's population. In 2011, there were 15.2 million refugees worldwide, half of whom were women. While migrants in Europe have positively contributed to European societies in countless ways: economically, culturally and socially, the European Union and its member states increasingly associate the issue of migration with crime and security policy. This only serves to fuel xenophobia and leads to discrimination and marginalisation of migrants.

The GUE/NGL rejects the EU's repressive approach to immigration. We believe Europe has a historical duty to develop a comprehensive and reasonable migration policy that guarantees human rights. We support the harmonisation of asylum systems across the EU as a means to adopt the most protective standards possible with regard to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers' rights.

## The Challenges

With the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, member states agreed to extend the EU's competences so it could make binding rules in almost all areas of migration and asylum policy. While freedom of movement rules were relaxed for European citizens within the EU with the establishment of the Schengen area, at the same time the EU's external borders were bolstered and reinforced, with complex and restrictive rules on conditions of entry and residence put in place. This makes it increasingly difficult for migrants from non-EU countries to enter the EU without breaking the law, particularly those from developing countries without visa facilitation programmes.

As EU legislation falls short on providing legal means to access asylum procedures, growing numbers of migrants, including asylum seekers, are left with few other options but to embark on

dangerous journeys in order to enter Europe. Where EU policies should guarantee proper reception conditions for migrants and asylum seekers, instead they cost thousands of lives and livelihoods each year: it is estimated that between 1998 and 2012, more than 16,000 people died trying to migrate to the EU.

But this repressive approach to migration does not just involve preventing migrants from crossing EU borders; it also impacts on the way migrants are treated when they are detained by authorities. Detention of migrants has become systematic: across Europe and at its borders, detention centres have multiplied from 324 in 2000 to 473 in 2012. In 2012, 570,660 asylum seekers were detained on EU territory and 252,785 were returned. The EU also increasingly encourages, finances, and promotes the detention of migrants in neighbouring states despite not being able to check that detainees are being given proper legal protection or monitor their human rights.

Third Countries are also increasingly being pressured into signing 'readmission agreements' of their nationals, as well as any migrants who have transited through their territory, in exchange for cooperation agreements with the EU, such as visa facilitation and/or development aid. These agreements are driven by a kind of conditionality which does not take into account local needs or migration causes but rather responds to EU security concerns. They do not offer any substantial benefits to the local population; rather they turn third-country authorities into EU migration management outposts who only allow restricted, temporary, and highly selective forms of immigration.

European countries have shown a lack of commitment to resettle refugees: among the 80,000 refugees resettled each year, only 5,000 are resettled in Europe.

Despite the existence of European directives on asylum, by no means can asylum seekers benefit from equal treatment between member states. Although the question of a common European asylum system has been on the table since 1999, we have yet to establish a genuine asylum policy centred on the rights of asylum seekers and the solidarity principle.



## Our campaign against Fortress Europe

GUE/NGL has long opposed the construction of 'fortress Europe' and has worked at the forefront of the No-Fortress Europe campaign to highlight the positive aspects of immigration and put forward policies based on the free movement of individuals which promote human rights.

Together with NGOs, GUE/NGL MEPs have repeatedly expressed concerns about how much of the EU budget was used to set up the EU border control agency FRONTEX in 2005 to strengthen the EU's external borders. GUE/NGL MEPs are also extremely concerned that EU funds are being used to develop border surveillance systems.

Our group has been at the frontline in denouncing the inhumanity of migrants' detention and the persistent breaches of fundamental rights that take place in many detention centres across Europe. Our group organised the European Parliament's first ever delegation to a temporary holding centre in Lampedusa in 2005. Since then, many other visits to detention centres have been organised. For many MEPs, these visits were their first experience of the reality of migrants' detention and many of them were left completely shocked and moved by what they witnessed. For our group, these visits confirmed what we have long been denouncing: administrative detention of migrants is unacceptable, both in legal and in moral terms, since it involves detaining people who have not committed any criminal offence!