

November 6, 2015



Dear colleagues,

The European Union is facing an unprecedented migratory pressure. In 2015 more than 1 million have claimed asylum in Europe so far. Many expect that these numbers will be repeated in the years to come. This makes one wonder how much our continent can reasonably deal with. The crisis we are faced with is unfortunately not a one shot, without a shared strategy this will become a structural problem.

Therefore I am writing you to share our analysis, concerns and perspectives.

Looking at the crisis, we see 5 main issues in our analysis:

- a. If the rescue missions at sea remain directly linked with access to the EU, the incentive for many will stay very high to risk their lives.
- b. We are focussing all our attention and efforts on those that reach Europe with the help of smugglers and take dangerous journeys. Is this the most humanitarian approach? Isn't it more humane to provide safe shelter for all in the region?
- c. Certain aspects of our European societies, for example the generous welfare system, are attracting asylum seekers and migrants. This should not be the case. An update of the Geneva Convention could fill this gap.
- d. Once in safety, there is no longer a real need to travel to another country for protection. It is all too often wrongly assumed that the right to protection is equal to the rights to choose freely in which country one claims asylum.
- e. More attention is paid to entry than to exit. Nevertheless many entering will have to return, to be prepared for this the focus on readmission policies has to take center stage.

Our concern is that the measures taken so far at the European level are not sufficient to provide structural answers. More thorough action is needed to face this crisis with a real humane approach that provides answers for everyone fleeing conflict, not just for those that have the means and capacities to claim asylum in our European countries.

What can be a comprehensive approach to counter these concerns?

First of all we need a stronger and more effective border policy to stop the flows. The external borders have to be closed. As long as there is a way to reach Europe illegally, there will be incentive to risk lives at sea. European values oblige us to end this terrible suffering. There can be no excuses for Europe, no outsourcing of this responsibility. We need to guard our borders, and we need to do it ourselves.

(...)

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Directly linked to this we should invest more in safe havens, preferably in the region surrounding the conflict zones. Safe reception in the region is easier to reach for all, less costly, and better suited for temporary protection before a return to the country of origin is possible. Access to protection in the region can and should be sufficient to stop migrants that claim asylum from coming to Europe. Once in a safe country, it should be made clear there is no longer a ground to flee.

We could consider to supplement this approach with a closed quota system, at a European and International level, to grant humanitarian access to a strictly limited number of refugees, based on the principle of solidarity between member states.

We hope this set of measures can provide the instruments to handle the crisis. What is needed most now is perspective. A perspective that the migration flows towards Europe are not endless. A perspective that strongly limits the numbers coming to Europe to a number that we can cope with in a reasonably way, while respecting access to safety in the regions of origins for all.

Sincerely ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bart De Wever', written in a cursive style.

Bart De Wever

N-VA President

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