



1 March 2007

Burden-sharing requires solidarity

PN-MEP Simon Busuttil said that burden-sharing on immigration required more solidarity on the part of EU Member States to help carry the disproportionate burden that is currently being shouldered by Southern countries, such as Malta.

Dr Busuttil was addressing the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee which was debating a report on practical co-operation and decision-making in the common European asylum system.

The report states that one of the improvements to be made to the European asylum system should consist of better burden sharing among Member States. It adds that the European Parliament is awaiting with interest the European Commission's upcoming assessment of the EU's Dublin II regulation later this year. This regulation determines which country has responsibility to deal with asylum applications.

Dr Busuttil welcomed this reference to burden sharing but expressed concern at the reluctance on the part of individual national Governments to shoulder responsibility.

"Let's face it," Dr Busuttil said, "national Governments have only been paying lip-service to burden sharing."

Dr Busuttil said that whereas the EU paid billions of euros to express solidarity with new Member States on the building of roads and the environment, when it came to sharing the burden of immigration, there was little solidarity to be seen.

"But, of course, solidarity does not just mean money," he said. "You cannot simply throw money at the problem of immigration. You need much more than that."

Resettlement, he said, was one of the tools available to truly share the burden. He explained how individual countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland and Lithuania, have already agreed to resettle some immigrants who landed in Malta. But this was not enough.

He added that the European Commission should do more to facilitate this kind of burden sharing, in particular, by helping host countries to deal with resettlement.

"Admittedly, burden sharing is not easy", he said. "But let us not forget that Southern Member States are not just policing their own maritime borders but also the external borders of the European Union. Other Member States should recognise this and accordingly carry part of the burden." he concluded.

.....

Office of Simon Busuttil MEP

Kevin Mizzi in Valletta: (356) 21228585

Elaine Cordina in Brussels: (0032) 02 284 5686