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MEP calls on EU to move faster

MEP Simon Busuttil called on the EU to rise to public expectations which wanted it to stem the flow of illegal immigration. He said that a short-term policy consisting of measures to combat illegal immigration effectively needed to move in parallel with the EU's traditional long-term policy intended to address the development needs of countries of origin.

Dr Busuttil was addressing a conference organised by the European People's Party in Granada, Spain on the "European Union facing the Challenge of Immigration". Dr Busuttil's speech dealt with the Southern dimension and focused on the Maltese experience.

Calling for short-term measures to combat illegal immigration, especially in Southern Europe. Dr Busuttil pointed to a number of measures which merited particular attention:

- Article 13 of the Condonou Agreement between the EU and African countries obliged the latter to accept the readmission of illegal immigrants. Yet, this article was being ignored by African countries and not enforced by the EU.
- The Dublin II regulation obliges EU countries of the first point of entry to be responsible for dealing with asylum requests. This law needed to be reviewed to enable more burden-sharing among EU countries in the light of the intolerable burden being carried by countries like Malta.
- Four new EU funds were established in the area of immigration – but these have still not entered into operation. An "emergency clause" has also been inserted in these funds to ensure that financial assistance can be disbursed quickly in cases of emergency.
- The EU Frontex Agency has had its budget almost doubled – to €35 million this year – thanks to amendments moved by the EPP-ED group in the Budgets Committee.
- For this first time ever, last year, Frontex embarked upon sea border patrols off the Canary Islands and between Malta and Libya. However, the results so far have not been impressive, not least because of complications such as lack of co-operation with countries such as Libya and lack of sufficient equipment and capabilities from EU countries. This year, the capabilities issue seems to have been settled. However, calls for co-operation with Libya have still not yielded sufficient results. Although Frontex patrols will resume this year in the central Mediterranean area, it was not yet clear when they will commence.
- Next week the European Parliament will adopt a new law which will provide, for the first time, for the deployment of EU Rapid Border Intervention Teams to assist EU countries facing an exceptionally grave situation with the influx of immigration. This law makes solidarity on immigration compulsory rather than optional.



Concluding Dr Busuttil said that although these concrete measures were positive steps forward, their effectiveness still needed to be seen when the immigration season resumes in the coming weeks.

"I am cautiously optimistic that some results can be achieved. But I do believe that more can be done." Dr Busuttil said. *"On immigration Europe is still far off from living up to public expectations. And I want it to move faster, much faster."* Dr Busuttil concluded

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