

EDITORIAL

The State of the Universe and the Union: A Look Back in Anguish on Last Week through a Migratory Burning Glass¹

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Thursday, 18 June 2023:

After years of debate, the Council of the European Union reaches an agreement on key elements of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Council outlines its positions for two new Regulations on Asylum Procedure and Migration Management (Council of the European Union, 2023a, 2023b). The first targets streamlined and accelerated procedures. Border procedures of up to 12-16 weeks (eventually to be continued) shall become mandatory following e.g., an application made at an external border crossing point or in a transit zone; apprehension in connection with an unauthorized crossing of the external border; disembarkation in the territory of a Member State after a search and rescue operation; or a relocation transfer.

“Member States should assess applications in a border procedure where the applicant is a danger to national security or public order, where the applicant has misled the authorities by presenting false information or documents or by withholding relevant information or documents with respect to his or her identity or nationality that could have had a negative impact on the decision and where it is likely that the application is unfounded because the applicant is of a nationality for whom the proportion of decisions granting international protection is lower than 20% of the total number of decisions for that third country. In other cases, such as when the applicant is from a safe country of origin or a safe third country, the use of the border procedure should be optional for the Member States” (Art. 40b of the Proposal for an Asylum Procedure Regulation).

Regular capacities should meet 30,000 on the Union level, distributed to the border States. Their obligation to the border procedure is generally limited by that cap at a time and four times as much in a year. A minimum of 30,000 annual relocations is introduced, each one fixed at €20,000 with responsibility offsets for those offering relocation. Mandatory distribution along fixed quotes could not be achieved. With Dublin-III criteria basically incorporated into the proposal for the Migration Management Regulation the burden remains on the southern and eastern Members States with a potential of seeking relief on the backs of the migrants (deterrence, abuse, inhumane reception conditions, insufficient procedures) or by neglecting obligations. Widened scopes for safe country of origin and safe third country mechanisms combined with accelerated asylum and return procedures will shift the burden to neighboring third countries.

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Sunday, 11 June 2023

In conclusion of a visit of the President of the EU Commission von der Leyen, Italian Prime Minister Meloni and Dutch Prime Minister Rutte to Tunisian President Saied, a joint press statement is titled “check by delivery”. Framed by initiatives on economic development, investment and trade, energy migration, in 2023,

“the EU will provide EUR 100 million to Tunisia for border management, but also search and rescue, anti-smuggling and return. The objective is to support a holistic migration policy rooted in the respect of human rights” (EU Commission, 2023).

At the same time, the EU will

“create a Tunisia window in the Erasmus+ programme worth EUR 10 million to support student exchange. And we will establish ‘Talent Partnerships’ to give Tunisia’s youth opportunities to study, work or train in the EU. They will develop new skills useful for modernising Tunisia’s economy” (EU Commission, 2023).

Tuesday, 20 June 2023

In sharp contrast, UNHCR celebrates the strength and courage of those forcefully displaced on the 2023 World Refugee Day under the theme of “Hope away from home – A world where refugees are always included.” As if to challenge ones ambiguity tolerance even further, on the very day, UNHCR’s Global Trends report announces a new all-time record high of 108.4 Million forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2022, among them, 35.3 million refugees, 62.5 million internally displaced people, 5.4 million asylum seekers, and 5.2 million other people in need of international protection. 76% of those were hosted in low- and middle-income countries. 52 percent of all refugees and other people in need of international protection came from the Syrian Arab Republic (6.5 million), Ukraine (5.7 million) and Afghanistan (5.7 million).

Wednesday, 21 June 2023

An overcrowded fishing boat with up to 750 migrants, including as many as 100 children, on board sank with the Greek coast guard close by. Up to 600 humans died. The 104 rescued were only male (Beake & Wright, 2023).

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