

PRESS RELEASE

Three proposals for safe and legal migration routes to Europe

After the dramatic shipwreck that cost the lives of at least 82 migrants, saving lives must be the absolute priority for the European Union.

PRESS CONTACT

Anna Echterhoff

Secretary-General of the UEF

secretariat@federalists.eu

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The Union of European Federalists (UEF) recalls that saving lives must be the absolute priority of the European Union. *“Our thoughts are to those who lost their lives and to their families. We call for coordinated support and full assistance to the survivors. In line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Union must guarantee the respect of Human Rights and international law including the non-refoulement principle. We need now full clarity and transparency in the ongoing investigation by the Greek Authorities,”* said Sandro Gozi MEP, President of the UEF.

The UEF calls for three concrete actions, ahead of the next European Summit meeting under the Swedish Presidency:

1. Firstly, **a thorough, independent, and impartial investigation into the cause of this catastrophe** to bring concrete answers to the pressing questions around the shipwreck: Why was a search and rescue operation not launched sooner? What are the causes of the ship capsizing?
Those who lost their lives, survivors and their families deserve transparency, truth and justice.
2. Secondly, similarly to actions taken after the Lampedusa shipwreck 10 years ago, **the establishment of a “Task Force Pylos”**. The Task Force will be in charge of identifying the current gaps and listing concrete measures needed for effective rights-based management of the EU's external borders and a sustainable EU asylum and migration policy. A stated objective of this Task Force should be the development and implementation of multipurpose

UEF European Secretariat

Square de Meeûs 25, 1000 Brussels | +32 (0)491 52 40 97

secretariat@federalists.eu | Transparency register n. [66364002603-57](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexp10/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&id=66364002603-57)

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maritime operations based on continuous cooperation of all relevant Agencies (FRONTEX, EFCA and EMSA) and national competent bodies.

3. Thirdly, **a real policy change to develop a truly common EU Labour Migration policy**, including through bold and courageous Treaty changes. The changes should respond to the needs and economic interests of the Union. To fight effectively against the network of smugglers, it is urgent to reinforce and extend the EU's cooperation with third countries including cooperation in the area of justice and judicial investigation.

Ten years after the Lampedusa shipwreck, this new tragedy resurfaces the pending question concerning the European Union's capacity to tackle migration and asylum challenges efficiently and humanely. Pylos demonstrates the extent of the challenge: preventing loss of lives by establishing safe and legal routes to Europe for people looking for protection. Despite the continuous efforts of the past ten years and the vast amount of money spent, basic elements of the EU asylum framework (such as humanitarian visas or a system of mutual recognition of asylum decisions) are still missing.

Since 2019, the UEF has called for safe and legal ways to entry in Europe as the only way to avoid such frequently occurring tragedies in the Mediterranean. In the same spirit, the European Parliament has invited on several occasions the European Commission to table concrete legislative proposals on these issues. Yet, once again, we come to the brutal realisation that these goals have not been attained.

The protection and saving of lives at the external borders should be the key priority in European integrated border management. The capacity and operational readiness to conduct effective search and rescue operations should be an important and integral part of the sea border surveillance operations at the external sea borders.

As the number of people drowning in the Mediterranean trying to reach safety in Europe rises, we cannot let Pylos be just another tragedy in a Union unconcerned with human suffering. Instead, let's work to build a safer and humane migration and asylum system. Only then will we be able to truly live up to the values our Union is founded upon.

Context

14 June 2023 saw one of the deadliest shipwrecks reported in the Mediterranean, as a ship carrying around 750 migrants and asylum seekers trying to reach Europe capsized off the coast of Greece. More than 80 people died and 600 more still missing at sea.

The Union of European Federalists (UEF) is a pan-European, non-governmental political organisation dedicated to the promotion of European political unity since 1946. We believe that completing European political unity is required to ensure Europe's economic prosperity and strength. The UEF calls for a European democracy where all citizens can determine the policies of a European government. The UEF promotes a federal, sovereign and democratic Europe.

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