

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE STRENGTHENING OF THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SCHENGEN AREA AND PROPOSING A NEW EU VISA POLICY AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A EUROPEAN REFUGEE STATUS DOCUMENT FOR PEOPLE SEEKING PROTECTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Resolution adopted by the Federal Committee following the UEF XXV European Congress, Strasbourg, 12 June 2016

Bearing in mind that:

In 2015 the European Union faced an unprecedented challenge with more than a million people seeking protection in the territory of its Member States. Responding to the severity of the refugee and migration crisis, the European Union reacted by starting to develop a comprehensive and holistic approach on Border Management, Migration and Asylum, putting forward concrete actions and legislative proposals aimed at responding to the emergencies faced by the EU Member States.

Due to the persistence and the deepening of the humanitarian crisis and the risk of proliferation of nationalist and anti-European behaviours by certain EU Member States' Governments, efforts and initiatives have been intensified since the beginning of 2016 to support both financially and operationally the most affected EU Member State, Greece, and to conclude an Agreement with the key neighbouring country, Turkey.

Despite the criticisms about the moral nature of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March, the effectiveness of the measures proposed, the high cost or even the political impact of the commitment taken on visa policy, it has to be recognised that by concluding this Agreement, the 28 EU Member States succeeded in agreeing to a common strategy to replace irregular and dangerous transit across the Aegean Sea with safe and legal entry channels of resettlement even if this is still limited and non-mandatory until now.

In a difficult period of economic stagnation for a large number of EU Member States, it is crucial to recall the efforts and initiatives taken by the European Union as well as the overall financial assistance provided in order to appropriately tackle the magnitude, multi-dimensional drivers and impact of the current refugee and humanitarian crisis.

Decisions have been based on the exceptional temporary safeguard clauses of the Schengen Border Code and have used the current rules for extending internal border controls to the maximum possible duration.

This massive use of safeguard clauses (currently four Schengen states have reintroduced internal border controls), which in some cases were accompanied by fences or other permanent installations justified by national public order considerations and aimed at avoiding granting protection to refugees and migrants, created an unprecedented amount of damage to one of the main achievements of the European Union, the establishment of an area without borders for EU citizens and third-country nationals regularly residing in the EU.

Without any doubt, this extended use of nationally motivated decisions puts the overall functioning of the Schengen area at risk and contributes to an increased feeling of insecurity among EU citizens. Given this extremely complex political environment we should, however, not forget the progress made in recent times, e.g. the proposal for a European Coast and Border Guard and the smart border package, and more recently by the proposed revision of the Dublin mechanism, the creation of a true European Asylum Agency, the visa liberalisation for countries fulfilling the EU criteria and the proposed improvement of the suspension mechanism in the EU visa legislation. **Despite that fact that all these measures are going in the right direction, they are still fragmentary and extremely limited to respond to the current challenges and do**

not succeed in providing the comprehensive and well-balanced global strategy that the European Union urgently needs to develop for the future.

In this context and having in mind the previous Resolutions adopted by the UEF in April and November 2015,

the Congress of the Union of European Federalists, meeting in Strasbourg on 11-12 June 2016, commits itself to taking all necessary actions at its level:

to recall that saving lives and preventing human tragedies will always be the main priority of EU action in managing the refugee crisis; to underline the need for strong and reliable border management at the EU external border, stressing the need that all actions and initiatives taken on border management, asylum and migration should reflect European values and respect of human rights and reinforce solidarity between EU Member States;

to remember the necessity of taking concrete measures ensuring feasible interconnected and interoperable information systems at the EU external border, in line with the provisions of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;

to urge for the modernisation of the EU Visa Policy, proposing a completely new structure, reflecting the importance of people mobility as an instrument of EU external policy and the experience of ten-year visa liberalisation dialogues;

to support, in the short term, the development of common rules for emergency situations at the EU external border and the creation of an effective and permanent crisis emergency mechanism for the massive influx of refugees and migrants defining clear criteria for its activation at the EU level;

to demand that the European Parliament and the Council adopt the Commission Proposal establishing a European Coast and Border Guard;

to reiterate the necessity of improving the security dimension within the overall management of the external border by using biometrics, and call for a quick adoption of the Commission proposal concerning an entry and exit system for the EU external border ensuring the interoperability with other systems (smart borders package);

to support the organisation of an Annual Colloquium on Schengen Governance promoting dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders for the development of a responsible and safe EU policy on Border management, Migration and Asylum;

regarding asylum in particular,

to call for an overall assessment of the measures taken in 2015 and present a global strategy for the future Common EU asylum system;

to urge for the introduction of an EU Asylum Identity Document to be issued by EU Member States to all third-country nationals seeking protection within the Schengen area. The security elements of this document shall be agreed in common and recognised by all EU Member States;

to support the establishment of a mandatory resettlement mechanism and the adoption of common rules for issuing humanitarian visas, strengthening legal routes to entry for people in need of international protection and reducing the loss of lives of migrants at sea and the abuses of smuggling networks;

to develop a comprehensive legal migration policy based on precisely identified needs at the EU level and to set up an ambitious integration policy which would contribute to promoting European values (including gender issues), fighting against radicalisation, racism and xenophobia;

to reconsider the external dimension of the EU Migration Policy, reflecting the new priorities of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Goals, exploring ways for more systematic cooperation focused on concrete priority actions and developing a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary governance strategy.