

## Address the needs of migrants in non-EU countries



Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers are providing psychological support to the children in the camps at the border between Tunisia and Libya, 3 July 2011. © Katherine Bundra Roux /IFRC.

Migration can pose both challenges and opportunities for development and can be a win-win situation for both countries of origin and destination. Yet EU external action tends to focus on measures to prevent migration<sup>(4)</sup>. EU countries often base their assistance on the capacity and/or willingness of countries of origin and transit to help in migration control.

EU Red Cross Societies believe that addressing the humanitarian needs and protecting fundamental rights of migrants should guide EU external policies on migration, development cooperation, and trade – and that these policy goals should be coherent with one another.

## The Red Cross EU Office

29 National Societies in the European Union and Norway form part of the world's largest humanitarian network, and employ over 250,000 staff. They also engage well over one million volunteers, and have more than eight million members. The Red Cross EU Office represents their interests, as well as those of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), before the European Union (EU) and its institutions.

We work to increase Red Cross influence on European Union policy, legislation and practice so as to improve the humanitarian situation of the most vulnerable, and aim to increase EU resources for our work at home and abroad in order to maximise the reach and scope of our global network through a coordinated approach. We also serve our members on EU-related issues, by monitoring the legal framework in which they operate, promoting information and knowledge sharing, and providing capacity building and a tailored approach to technical support.

Our activities span across four areas:

1. Disaster and Crisis
2. Development Aid
3. Asylum and Migration
4. Social Inclusion

### Asylum and Migration

Asylum, migration and displacement are of high importance to Red Cross Societies in the EU, as many play a key role in receiving refugees and providing counselling, health care and social assistance, as well as supporting integration and participation in community life. We help Red Cross Societies in the European Union to better understand the EU policy framework on migration and asylum, and advocate for EU migration policies that safeguard humanitarian principles and respect the dignity of migrants and refugees, regardless of their legal status. We promote adequate support for vulnerable migrants irrespective of their legal status, including access to protection and to basic services.

4. RCEU (2013), *Shifting borders. Externalising migrant vulnerabilities and rights?*, 6 November 2013.

# Red Cross EU Office Recommendations on migration and asylum in the European Union



## Overview

Migration is one of the major humanitarian challenges that the European Union (EU) and the world currently face.

For many years EU Red Cross Societies have worked with and for migrants, because many of them are among the most vulnerable in society.

EU Red Cross Societies also believe in the many benefits of migration and the contribution migrants can make to all the countries involved.

EU Red Cross Societies wish to highlight the following priorities for leaders and policy makers of the EU, in order to better protect and support all migrants as called for by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Policy on migration, endorsed by the 17th General Assembly of the IFRC in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2009.

## Our recommendations to the EU

### Respect and protect the rights of migrants – whatever their legal status

EU Red Cross Societies are concerned about the wellbeing of migrants who may lack access to basic services or to health, social and legal systems.

Migrants should receive humane and fair treatment. Their dignity, human rights, safety and wellbeing must be protected – wherever they may be<sup>(1)</sup>. A particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable migrant.

#### Red Cross Red Crescent Principles

We are guided at all times by our Fundamental Principles:  
Humanity  
Impartiality  
Neutrality  
Independence  
Voluntary Services  
Unity  
Universality



Homework workshop with unaccompanied minors

© Spanish Red Cross

### Support migration policies guided by the principle of humanity and respect for dignity

A consistent labour migration framework, across the EU, would help to address the challenges of demographic change and an ageing population – but migration cannot be managed solely from an economic perspective.

Migration policies must support legal and safe migration whether for employment, education, or family reunion. Migrants' needs and interests should be considered, and migration policies should support their social inclusion, integration and their aspirations. Integral to the success of migration policies is active engagement and dialogue between migrants and host communities.

### Promote the positive contribution of migrants

Many migrants in Europe experience exclusion, poverty, racism and xenophobia.

Migration is often seen as a threat or considered solely within the labour market context. Yet it has occurred throughout history, enriching societies.

We need to raise awareness of the positive contribution that migrants make to European culture, development, and economic growth. To do this, we have to counter the stereotypes that feed discriminatory attitudes.

### Set up legal channels for asylum seekers to access international protection

Many people who flee persecution, violence and human rights violations find it increasingly difficult – if not impossible – to reach safety in another country.

1. See the Resolution n°3 of the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva 2011 'Migration: Ensuring Access, Dignity, Respect for Diversity and Social Inclusion.'

Measures to prevent the irregular entry of migrants have resulted in endangering their safety and security and affected their ability to seek international protection in the EU. EU Red Cross Societies therefore call on governments to set up safe and effective legal avenues to grant protection to those in need as a matter of urgency<sup>(2)</sup>.

### Share responsibility in applying a Common European Asylum System



Responding to the immediate humanitarian needs of migrants who have made it to the Italian shores.

© Bastianetto, Italian Red Cross.

High priority must be given to meeting the basic needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Every person in need of international protection in the EU should have access to fair, transparent, accountable and high-quality asylum procedures and reception facilities.

Effective solidarity mechanisms should be developed to promote consistency and the highest possible standards across the entire EU.

### Respect the dignity and rights of all migrants in border management policies

People arrive at national borders for multiple reasons and with different vulnerabilities. They should always be treated with humanity, regardless of their legal status.



Syrian refugee children playing with Bulgarian Red Cross Youth team, 2014.

© Dimitrina Popova, Bulgarian Red Cross

They should receive information about their rights in a language they understand. Those who are particularly vulnerable require sensitive handling by border authorities. People fleeing persecution and armed conflict must have access to fair asylum procedures.

### Make detention of migrants a 'last resort' measure

EU Red Cross Societies believe that detention of migrants increases the vulnerability of people who are already in a vulnerable situation<sup>(3)</sup>.

Detention should be a measure of 'last resort' only, used for a minimal period of time, under conditions monitored regularly by independent actors. Detention of asylum seekers should be avoided and particularly vulnerable people should never be detained.

2. RCEU (2013), [Legal avenues to access international protection in the EU](#), 27 February 2013.

3. This is particularly the case of traumatised persons, victims of torture and ill treatment, victims of human trafficking, minors, people with disabilities, pregnant women, elderly persons, etc