



Mr Donald Tusk
President of the European Council

Brussels, 27 June 2018

Dear Mr President,

The European Union is at a historic turning point. The number of Member State governments who are using the migration crisis to incite fear, hatred and xenophobia has significantly increased. This approach fiercely contradicts the values the European Union was built on after World War II that brought peace, economic growth and prosperity to the peoples of Europe. We, the Members of the European Parliament across party lines, firmly condemn such an approach. You, as the President of the European Council, have a historic responsibility to make clear at the upcoming European Council meeting that the European Union will not identify itself with such an approach and will always remain true to its traditions of humanism and liberal democracy.

Migration policy has become one of the existential challenges the Union is faced with. Hence, the European Parliament, together with the European Commission, worked intensively on the reform of the Common European Asylum System. We firmly believe that resolving the issue of people in need for international protection requires a common European effort. There is no alternative to that. The unilateral measure of Member States, such as closing borders and ports, building fences can only lead to the eventual collapse of the Schengen system, one of the main achievements of the European Union.

At the same time, we must recognise that Council's half-hearted participation in this endeavour has not helped but led to the escalation of the already grave situation. This attitude further strengthened the positions of populist governments across Europe. In the European Parliament, we learnt the importance of finding compromises but also that there are limits above which only bad compromises can be found. It is in this spirit that we question the idea of establishing pre-screening centres or hotspots outside Europe. Such a solution might bring temporary relief to frontline Member States, but it will not bring about a sustainable solution in the end. Moreover, it would only benefit smuggling networks. The only alternative is a system based on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibilities.

The main topic of the upcoming summit will be migration. What we expect from this summit, is that you and the heads of states and governments will finally do what is necessary for the reform of the CEAS. Not only in words, but also in deeds. The European Council should commit to:

- moving forward with the reform of the Dublin system and to finally finding a common solution
- doing the necessary for the European Union Agency for Asylum to be set up two years after a provisional agreement between Council and Parliament was struck
- fighting against smuggling in human beings more ambitiously and more effectively than ever
- real and effective measures to help the countries, in order to reduce the number of people intending to leave.

Legal instruments of CEAS govern, among others, the criteria for determining who is really in need of international protection, the procedure to be carried out and the reception conditions. However, there are two aspects that we believe should be reinforced.



On the one hand, it is necessary to improve the effectiveness of the return to their home countries for those whose refugee request has been subject to a final decision. It is unacceptable that the appeal procedures and the return procedures often take years, due to bureaucratic reasons, while these individuals live in a legal

limbo. They will not find a new home, but all their connections with their country of origin will be interrupted. Therefore, we believe it is essential to establish an EU-funded reintegration fund for the people who are returned to help them with reintegration, education and finding employment.

On the other hand, as part of the CEAS, a European integration model should be developed to assist those who have been granted international protection and reside in the EU legally with integrating into society and access to education, healthcare and labour market. Without such a model, the CEAS will never function properly. If we fail to create the common European conditions for integration, we are waiting for the integration of refugees in vain. Integration is always a two-way process: inclusion and integration.

Mr. President,

We are confident that you feel the historic responsibility you face in this difficult situation. That is why we are once again ask you to support the CEAS at the upcoming summit and stand by the values on which the EU is built upon. Help us protecting the Schengen Area. We, the Members of the European Parliament, will support you with all our strength in this effort. Let us not allow Europe, the great idea of the European Union to become a victim of populism, xenophobia and isolationism!

Yours sincerely,

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Bart Staes (Greens-EFA, Belgium)
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