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Europe is a continent of migration

The act of free movement as well as the freedom to stay, are human rights. Migrants have shaped cultures and societies in the past, and will continue doing so. However, forced migration leads to suffering and decline, and the root causes that force people to leave their societies must be combated. Anyone who has ever tried building a fortress Europe has failed.

The borders of the European Union are not limited to the exterior borders, but are also present at airports, in summary controls of identity within the borders and in the electronic control systems that are being implemented throughout Europe.

Now more than ever we need shared positions. The European Greens agree on a common approach to Migration, emphasizing solidarity. Looking at it as a global phenomenon it provides opportunities for effective analysis. We Greens base our position on the rights that citizens must have. It is not based on the restrictions that we would impose on them.

We Greens strive for proactive policies that benefit the migrant and the society as a whole. Inclusion policy – we prefer this term to the commonly used one “integration” – is not a favour to migrants, it is needed for the whole society to function. It is an enriching process for the whole population. If it is not done well – as is the case in most European countries – problems, fears, anxieties, prejudice on both sides can and do occur.

We Greens believe in diversity as a positive value. We are not afraid of the prospect of change in our communities, being supportive of inclusion as a dialogue and not as an imposition.

We Greens want to open more bridges into Europe: it is fundamental for us. We want to broaden the legal channels through which people settle in the EU. If there are legal ways to Europe, less people will go a dangerous and potential deadly journey.

These principles will not prevent us from working on the causes that make migration a necessity and not a choice. Actions to combat climate change must be further developed and given enough funding to guarantee definite results. This will also bring about new jobs. The EU must throw all of its energy towards preventing conflicts and restore peaceful conditions all over the world. Improving co-development and making sure the EU devotes part of its budget towards education and development schemes in the sourcing countries is only a means of restoring balance in European migration policies which are skewed to law-enforcement objectives rather than providing treatment characterized by humanity, care, respect and empathy.

Full access to the labour market for all EU residents

Before looking at the potential labour migrants outside the European Union, Member States should first grant full access to the labour market to all present residents within the Union. That means that nationals of the “new member states” have the full freedom of movement immediately after their accession. All third country nationals already settled in the EU, including their family members, should have full access to the labour market, health and education facilities. Against the structural and factual discrimination of women the visas and working permits of female immigrants should be independent from the ones of their husbands and children so they are not dependent on the right of men and children to stay in a country. After three years of residence and work, they should receive the same social rights and freedom of movement and settlement as European Union citizens.

EU policy on labour migration: blue card, temporary migration and minimum standards

To the EU proposal of a blue card for highly skilled migrants, EGP wants to add the possibility of facilitated entry for semi-skilled and unskilled workers. This would allow third country nationals to enter the EU legally, search for work and get a working permit legally. After a certain period of time – for example two or three years – it should be possible to change from a temporary to a permanent status. Knowing that the needs and realities of the labour markets are different in each Member State, the EGP does not favour a central quota for the whole EU, but prefers choices on numbers being made on national level. EGP calls for a legal framework on EU-level for minimum standards on the rights of labour migrants. The EU has to guarantee protection against abuse by employers and slum lords, give migrants the possibility and responsibility to integrate, develop their skills and participate. The minimum standards encompass transparency, criteria and time limits on application procedures, the right to the national minimum wage, family reunification and access to housing and education.

Failure of the “Guest worker system”

All types of migration lead to a transfer of skills, ideas, knowledge, create links and interpersonal networks, contribute to social and economic development of both home and host countries, as well as contributing to workers themselves. Nowadays most migrants cannot move freely to and from their home countries, because leaving the European Union means a big risk of never being admitted anymore. EGP rejects the proposed idea of circular migration, admitting migrants only temporary, because of the risk of failure like the old “Guest worker system”. Migrants that are admitted temporarily must have the chance to obtain a permanent residence permit. Member States should stimulate migration by creating conditions for migrants, without affecting their rights and choices. Furthermore, the EU shall contribute to the transfer of skills and knowledge by granting access to their universities and high schools to a generous number of people from “developing countries”.

Greens, migrants and society

We Greens recognize that Europe today is a continent in which many cultures coexist. We strive for inclusion processes through which all inhabitants from Europe can increase their equitable participation in the society. The goal of these processes and our ideal society is one in which all citizens are integrated, with equal rights and fair chances.

Integration: it must not be a prerequisite for migrants, but a goal

In the last years politicians from Europe consider the possibility of integration as a requisite to migrate to Europe. We Greens reject this view: integration is a goal and inclusion processes are the tool that society uses to help all citizens to participate. Inclusion must happen when the migrant is in Europe, not before. Inclusion policy is desirable and needed for the better functioning of our society as a whole

Green inclusion policy: a two way process

For us Greens is fundamental to recognize that an integrated society is one that respects diverse groups as well as individuals. It is not only the migrant that should adapt to Europe: Europe must also adapt to the migrant. The inclusion process is a dialogue, and as any other dialogue has two directions. As much as we ask from migrants to adapt into a new society, we also ask the existing society to change in a way that the newcomers feel welcome.

In this dialogue it is also clear for Greens that all people have to accept the principles many women and men have fought for for decades, like secularity and separation of religion and state, women's rights, rights of sexual minorities, democratic rules of majority decision making, with respect for minorities' opinion, and others.

Green inclusion policy: organizations and networks

Migrants organize in different ways in every country. We Greens recognize the positive role that these organized individuals can contribute to the inclusion process. As important as formal organizations, we recognize and value the existence of informal networks of individuals, as valuable in our society.

Green inclusion policy: rights of the migrant

All migrants are entitled to fundamental human rights. Family reunification is one of those rights: we fully honour everyone's right to live with his or her family, as stated in the European Convention on Human Rights. There is a tendency of EU Member States to restrain people from exercising this right, making unreasonable demands to migrants who want to reunify their family in the European Union. Barriers such as having to pass a language test in their home country or requiring that they earn much

more than the minimum wage are prejudicial. We Greens reject these requirements and guarantee the right to live in family. Other rights can be incremental in time, up to the point in which migrants have the same equal rights that European citizens have. We strive for a society in which all individuals are equal against the law.

Access to asylum

Every person who needs shelter according to the Geneva Conventions must have the possibility to get access to a fair asylum procedure in Europe. The Greens demand that access to a fair asylum procedure is always granted to those who need it, in a language the asylum seeker understands or with the help of translator and with free legal assistance at all stages of the procedure. In each case an individual assessment is needed, based on objective information of the human rights situation in the home country. Agencies should never use lists of “safe third countries” which rarely reflect the harsh living conditions in some countries. The agency responsible for processing the claim should be independent from the government.

Protection on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation

Gender reasons to escape the country of origin like genital mutilation, oppression and religious persecution because of gender, ‘honour crimes’, rape, forced abortion or sterilisation must be accepted as reasons to get asylum in all EU countries, as well as persecution on grounds of sexual orientation. Neither the acknowledged difficulty of bringing the proof of the aforementioned persecutions nor the concept of “safe countries” should have a negative impact on granting the status of refugee according to the Geneva Convention.

Protection of persons fleeing a conflict

Asylum seekers fleeing a conflict should be granted a high quality protection, with minimum rights, such as family reunification and access to the labour market. If the conflict they fled is still going on after three years, they should be granted a permanent residence permit.

Climate change refugees

There are now migrants, displaced persons and their families, who must leave their land because of environmental disaster that results from both incremental and rapid ecological and climatic change that includes sea level rise, coastal erosion, desertification, collapsing ecosystems, water contamination and weather events that are more frequent and unpredictable. As a result, inhabitants are unable to live safe or sustainable lives in their immediate environment. Some island nations may cease to exist. The word refugee has been used with strong moral connotations of societal protection in most world cultures, and it must now be extended to those who are forced to migrate because of climatic change.

The Dublin convention

The EGP favours the revision or removal of the Dublin II convention on the grounds that it creates a disproportionate burden for some countries and complicates the processing of asylum claims. The removal of this Convention is essential for small former “transit” countries. Member States should show more mutual solidarity in taking the responsibility for asylum requests. The European Union has to guarantee an overall high level of protection. We end the system that border countries carry most of the migration burden: asylum seekers are allowed to seek asylum (only) once in the country of their choice, which is not necessarily the country where they entered Europe. The European Refugee Fund will compensate financially Member States dealing with the biggest share of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers may not be deported to neighbouring countries without having assessed the asylum claim.

Borders

The EGP favours an EU-competency for surveillance of external borders of the Union, in order not to overwhelm border-countries. Frontex has to acknowledge the International Refugee Conventions and the European Convention on Human Rights. Human Rights must be integrated in the training of Frontex personal. The EGP criticizes Frontex, the EU agency with the responsibility to manage borders, for rather aiming at deterring migrants than protecting them when they arrive in the EU. The EU should never stop people from eventually claiming asylum and becoming recognised refugees. Since addressing the reasons for migration is not Frontex’s responsibility it cannot decrease the number of irregular migrants coming to the EU, however, it should save lives by rescuing boat people.

Detention

The European Greens oppose the principle of detaining persons not found guilty of any crime but who just violated an administrative rule (i.e. entering or staying without proper documentation in the European Union). Detention is a juridical paradox. As long as detention still exists the EGP calls for a detention as short as possible (preferably only a few days) and in the best conditions possible (as regards to recreation, hygiene and privacy), and never be applied to minors, asylum seekers and those in vulnerable positions. All detainees should have access to free legal advice, social assistance and medical support within the centre. For a better transparency, centres should be checked by an institution responsible for controlling the standards of detention places. Centres should also be made accessible to politicians, media, NGOs and international organisations. The use of handcuffs and other degrading treatment on migrants is condemned.

Improving the situation for irregular migrants

Many irregular migrants suffer from their insecure situation, the lack of rights and the risk of abuse and exploitation. Irregular migrants should have access to basic provisions such as health care, and education for children. EGP wants to diminish their number by creating more legal ways for entering the European Union. Furthermore, EGP favours regularisations for irregular migrants who have contributed to the Member States for a number of years.

Assistance to irregular migrants

The EGP recognizes a distinction between people helping out irregular migrants (smugglers, people offering a shelter or rescuing them at sea...) and people abusing migrants (traffickers, slumlords...). Although the abuse of migrants is to be sanctioned, helping undocumented migrants should be tolerated and not considered a crime. Captains who rescue boat people should not be punished by law. Instead all member states should open their harbours for castaways.

Human trafficking, smuggling networks

The best way to attack the smugglers networks is to deprive them of their profits. There are policies that have indirect effects on the profitability of the trafficking business. Regularization campaigns, amnesties for illegal migrants, job training reduce the expected profits of traffickers as they reduce the enforceability of debt contracts between intermediates and migrants. In the legal sector trafficking agreements are harder to enforce, the migrant defaults and can turn to the police for protection once he or she receives legal status.

In order to fight against human trafficking, the victims of human trafficking who have been forced (or are meant to be forced) to work in the sex industry or in diplomatic or other households, who have been or are meant to be forced into marriage, etc. in the EU against their will should get the right to stay and get a regular working permit.