



2024 Winter Meeting
Report of Vice-President Dr. Daniela De Ridder,
Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration,
to the Joint Session of the Three General Committees

(Vienna, Friday, 23 February 2024)

Madam President,
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to update you on the planned activities of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration.

Our Committee is planning two field visits before the next Annual Session and potentially one more in the autumn, focusing on addressing irregular migration across the various Mediterranean routes. We furthermore intend to complement these activities with a number of online policy exchanges.

Addressing irregular migration across the Central Mediterranean: Focus on Lampedusa

The year 2023 saw a record number of irregular arrivals across the various Mediterranean routes: over 270,000.¹ This was the highest figure since the “migration crisis” of 2015-2016 and confirmed a consistent upward trend following a drop in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Central Mediterranean route notably experienced a 50 per cent increase in irregular border crossings in 2023 compared to 2022, mostly in Italy.²

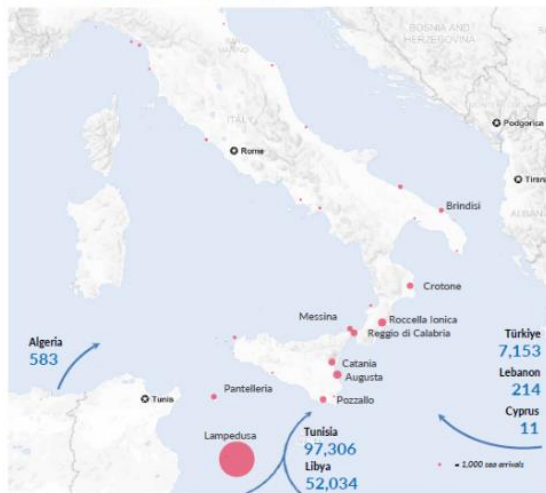
Lampedusa has long been targeted by people smugglers as it is situated a little over 100km from the Tunisian coast. With Tunisia now the main launching pad for Europe, the island today is receiving around 70 per cent of all migrants arriving in Italy. Aboard the boats arriving in Lampedusa from Tunisia are citizens of various African nations, including Ivory Coast, Guinea, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali and

¹ The figure of 270,180 includes sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus, and Malta, and both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain (including the Canary Islands). See: UNHCR, Mediterranean situation, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

² A total of 157,300 arrivals were registered in Italy in 2023. Source: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/significant-rise-in-irregular-border-crossings-in-2023-highest-since-2016-C0gGpm>

Tunisians themselves. Many lived and worked in Tunisia for years before deciding to set off to Europe. There is also a growing number of people arriving from Tunisia after crossing in from neighbouring Libya, according to IOM. These include citizens of Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan displaced by conflict. The majority are young men or unaccompanied minors (about 12 per cent), but there are also women and children.

Sea Arrivals in 2023 by disembarkation site



In barely two days in September 2023, more than 7,000 people arrived in around 120 small boats, taking the number of arrivals up to 10,000 people by the middle of the month. This was a record-breaking figure for this island of around 6,000 inhabitants. The island's single reception centre ("hotspot") – with an official capacity of only about 400 persons – has been struggling to cope. Most arrivals are transferred to Sicily as well as the mainland to ease overcrowding.

Following a high-level visit by EU officials, the European Commission presented a 10-point plan for swift support to Lampedusa to reduce irregular migration and provide immediate EU assistance, in accordance with fundamental rights and international conventions. One issue is that, while Italy has a repatriation agreement with Tunisia to send back Tunisian citizens ineligible for asylum, it does not have similar agreements with most of the other countries whose citizens are arriving in Italy. There have also been serious concerns expressed by human rights organizations regarding human rights abuses not only in Libya but also in Tunisia.

The Committee is very grateful that its request to visit Lampedusa has been met positively and that it has been invited by the Head of the Delegation of Italy to the OSCE PA and OSCE PA Special Representative on Combating Organised Crime Mr. Eugenio Zoffili to visit Rome and Lampedusa from 6-8 March 2024. This will be an important opportunity to learn first-hand about the situation on the ground with a focus on measures to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and other forms of organized crime in the context of mixed migration flows. As with previous field visits, the Committee is also interested in procedures for other categories of vulnerable migrants such as unaccompanied minors.

Addressing irregular migration along the Eastern Mediterranean route: update on the situation in Türkiye

The Committee has been invited by its Turkish Member Mr. Kemal Çelik to carry out a field visit to Türkiye during the second half of May 2024. The Committee will

travel to Ankara to meet with a broad range of authorities as well as visit refugee camps near the border with Syria.

This visit will come a little over a year after the devastating earthquake which struck south-eastern Türkiye and northern Syria and which primarily affected the regions hosting Syrian refugees. Many of these areas were already hosting displaced people. In Türkiye, more than 9.1 million people are directly affected by the earthquakes – 1.7 million of whom are Syrian refugees.

The visit will take place against the background of revived cooperation with neighbouring Greece in order to more effectively counter irregular migration along the Eastern Mediterranean route.

The Moroccan approach to migration management

Initial exchanges have taken place with Members of the Moroccan parliament on the possibility of a joint visit of the Committee together with the OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard.

Morocco, traditionally a country of origin has gradually become a country of transit and destination for migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and Syria. Morocco has taken the lead on African migration. In 2014, Moroccan authorities adopted a National Migration Strategy focusing on the integration and access to public services for regular migrants. It has launched a comprehensive migration reform drive that has offered legal status to nearly 50,000 migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Non-regularized migrants have also been granted access to certain basic services. Morocco also plays a proactive role in promoting better migration governance at a regional level.



EU cooperation with Morocco has improved with the latter increasingly acting as a gatekeeper for migration towards the EU. Morocco attracts migrants hoping to cross into Spain and the European Union through its land borders at the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla while Spain's Canary Islands are a mere 100km away from the Moroccan coast. In 2023, Morocco

reportedly stopped over 75,000 people from entering Europe, a 6 per cent increase in interceptions over the previous year. Attempts to cross into Ceuta and Melilla in 2023 were down 62 per cent compared to 2022. At the same time, tighter surveillance of Morocco's northern borders has been accompanied by an increase in the number of migrants attempting the riskier and longer North Atlantic route from the West Coast of Africa to the Canary Islands.

Ukraine Refugee Situation

As we mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Committee continues to monitor the situation of Ukrainian refugees throughout the OSCE region. There are now nearly 6.5 million Ukrainian refugees globally, 6 million of whom are in Europe.

While the peak of the displacement occurred during the first four months of the full-scale invasion, population movements from and to Ukraine have become more complex. Many refugees engage in pendular movements and short-term visits between Ukraine and host countries; others have returned to Ukraine on a more permanent basis.³ The most frequent reasons reported for travelling back to Ukraine are to visit relatives or friends, followed by access to healthcare and to obtain documentation. Short-term visits are more frequent among refugees hosted in neighbouring countries. Surveys have further highlighted that 40 per cent of refugees were unable to visit Ukraine even if they wanted to, due to security concerns or lack of funds, followed by caregiving responsibilities, lack of documentation and fear of losing legal status in host countries.

In its [Position on Voluntary Return to Ukraine](#),⁴ UNHCR emphasizes that the ability to travel home for short periods can help pave the way for more **durable returns** once conditions permit. It has urged host states to maintain a flexible approach to short-term visits to Ukraine, which can help facilitate fully informed decisions on longer term return and recommends that an individual's legal status and associated rights in a host country are not affected by a visit to Ukraine lasting less than three months. UNHCR additionally recommends that in the event of longer-term travel to Ukraine, hosting countries temporarily de-activate temporary protection and other legal status rather than deregistering individuals, in order to avoid administrative burdens and facilitate renewed access to protection if required.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration will continue to promote the sharing of best practice when it comes to protecting and promoting durable solutions with respect to Ukrainian refugees. As a Member of the OSCE PA Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, I will also continue to advocate for support for displaced Ukrainians within and beyond the borders of Ukraine.

Refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe ¹

6,004,100

Last updated 15 February 2024 - Source: UNHCR collation of statistics made available by the authorities

Refugees from Ukraine recorded beyond Europe ²

475,600

Last updated 27 January 2024 - Source: UNHCR collation of statistics made available by the authorities

Refugees from Ukraine recorded globally

6,479,700

Last updated 15 February 2024 - Source: UNHCR collation of statistics made available by the authorities

³ UNHCR, Ukraine Refugee Situation – Population Movements Factsheet #1, February 2024, at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/106707>.

⁴ UNHCR, Position on Voluntary Return to Ukraine, June 2023, <https://www.refworld.org/policy/countrypos/unhcr/2023/en/124299>.

Policy discussions and parliamentary exchange of ‘best practice’

The Committee also intends to hold 1-2 more online policy discussions before the Annual Session in Bucharest to complement its field visits.

❖ EU Migration and Asylum Pact

One of these will be devoted to the reforms in EU migration and asylum policy. Discussions on the new **Pact on Migration and Asylum** have been ongoing since it was announced in September 2020. Following a political provisional agreement on the migration pact reached by EU institutions last December, the European Parliament will hold the first vote of formal approval in its plenary session in April, only months before the June European elections. The new regulations will have wide-ranging implications and are expected to pave the way for a more humane and better coordinated management of borders and migration flows.

One of its key components, agreed to already in June 2022, is a so-called “voluntary solidarity mechanism” which foresees the relocation of asylum seekers to pledging Member States for one year, primarily from Member States confronted with disembarkations (following search and rescue operations). Committing Member States can contribute financially or in other ways if they are unable to fulfil their relocation pledges.

In December 2023, agreement was reached between the European Council and the European Parliament on five key proposals of the Pact:

- *Screening Regulation*: Creating uniform rules concerning the identification of non-EU nationals upon their arrival, thus increasing the security within the Schengen area.
- *Eurodac Regulation*: Developing a common database gathering more accurate and complete data to detect unauthorised movements.
- *Asylum Procedures Regulation*: Making asylum, return and border procedures quicker and more effective.
- *Asylum Migration Management Regulation*: Establishing a new solidarity mechanism amongst Member States to balance the current system, where a few countries are responsible for the vast majority of asylum applications, and clear rules on responsibility for asylum applications.
- *Crisis and Force majeure Regulation*: Ensuring that the EU is prepared in the future to face situations of crisis, including instrumentalization of migrants.

European Parliament President Roberto Metsola has hailed the agreement reached in December 2023 as a blueprint for the EU to lead the way globally in migration matters. At the same time, human rights organizations have voiced concerns that they will lead to a diminishing of the rights of people on the move, an

increase in the number of persons detained at borders and more people being channelled through “substandard border asylum procedures”.⁵ According to the IRC, the Pact could lead to countries on Europe’s borders coming under more pressure, not less.⁶ The IRC has furthermore cautioned about the disproportionate focus on stopping people from reaching Europe that could increase the vulnerability of displaced people and undermine efforts to address the underlying drivers of migration.⁷

These are complex issues which the Committee looks forward to discussing with a view to better understanding the implications, achievements and challenges which lay ahead.

❖ **Implementing gender sensitive migration policies**

The Committee also wishes to underline the importance of promoting ‘best practice’ in the area of gender-sensitive migration policies. One area which needs further attention is the identification and protection of victims of gender based violence (GBV) in the migration context. GBV is not only a ‘driver’ of migration but it is also a risk which people on the move face, especially where safe routes and the necessary safeguards are lacking.

While men and boys also experience gender-based violence, women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by all forms of gender based violence. Along certain migration routes, the risk of gender-based violence is particularly high. For instance, in one study⁸ conducted with migrants who had travelled along the Mediterranean route from Northern Africa to Italy, it was estimated that 90 per cent of the women and girls who participated in the study were raped at some point during their journeys.

The threat or experience of gender-based violence can be a factor compelling women and girls to migrate. In the Horn of Africa, for example, women and girls migrate to escape gender-based violence and other harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.

⁵ Amnesty International, “EU: Migration Pact agreement will lead to a ‘surge in suffering,’” 20 December 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/eu-migration-pact-agreement-will-lead-to-a-surge-in-suffering/>.

⁶ International Rescue Committee, “What is the EU Pact on Migration?”, 27 October 2023, last updated 21 December 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum>.

⁷ International Rescue Committee, “What is the EU Pact on Migration?”, 27 October 2023, last updated 21 December 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum>.

⁸ Women’s Refugee Commission, “*More Than One Million Pains*”: Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys on the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy, 2019.

In countries of transit or destination, migrant women, especially those who are undocumented, often lack access to decent work and social protection. They are therefore more likely to accept deplorable working conditions, with many working in the informal economy with limited or no labour protection, exacerbating their risk of gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation in the workplace.

This is an area where more research is needed and where we, as parliamentarians, can make a significant impact in reducing the risks of GBV.

Cooperation with the OSCE and Institutions, relevant International Organisations, European Parliament, PACE

I have invited Dr. Kari Johnstone, who was appointed OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings last October, to address our Committee here in Vienna on the sidelines of the 2024 Winter Meeting, and to highlight the role which parliamentarians can play in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. The Committee looks forward to further co-operation with Dr. Johnstone and to exchanging observations and recommendations in relation to field visits in particular.

The Committee will continue to regularly engage with the OSCE and other institutions such as the European Parliament, PACE as well as representatives of UNHCR, IOM as well as international and local NGOs where relevant.

Next Steps

Our Committee will meet here in Vienna on 22 February to discuss upcoming field visits, policy discussions and on how it will present its findings and recommendations to the Assembly as a whole.

I look forward to presenting the report and recommendations of the Committee to you when we next meet in Bucharest.

Thank you for your attention.

ANNEX I

OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

A. Mandate

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration was established following the unanimous decision of the OSCE PA Standing Committee on 25 February 2016 in Vienna. Its mandate is defined as follows:

- Serve as a focal point for the OSCE PA's work in the field of migration in all three dimensions of the OSCE: political and security questions; economic issues; and human rights and humanitarian questions; and report back to the President and the Standing Committee;
- Develop policy recommendations aimed at enhancing OSCE work in the field of migration and at improving the treatment of, and prospects for, migrants in OSCE countries;
- Promote discussion within the Assembly on issues related to migration, and promote parliamentary exchanges of best practice in these fields;
- Work closely with the OSCE Secretariat and Institutions as well as with relevant outside actors on issues related to migration to promote the understanding among the members of the Assembly of the importance of the work done in this field.

B. Membership *(as of 2 November 2023)*

1. **Chair:** Dr. Daniela DE RIDDER (Germany), OSCE PA Vice-President
2. Lord Alfred DUBS (United Kingdom), **Vice-Chair**
3. Kyriakos HADJIYIANNI (Cyprus), **Vice-Chair**, OSCE PA Vice-President
4. Farah KARIMI (The Netherlands), **Vice-Chair**
5. Gudrun KUGLER (Austria), **Vice-Chair**
6. Alessandro ALFIERI (Italy)
7. Susana AMADOR (Portugal)
8. Jan BAUER (Czech Republic)
9. Malik BEN ACHOUR (Belgium)
10. Valérie BOYER (France)
11. Johan BÜSER (Sweden)
12. Kemal ÇELİK (Türkiye)
13. Fabrizio COMBA (Italy)
14. Hedy FRY (Canada)
15. Sheila JACKSON LEE (United States of America)
16. Laurynas KASČIŪNAS (Lithuania)
17. Kristian KLINCK (Germany)
18. Dimitrios MARKOPOULOS (Greece)
19. Gwen MOORE (United States of America)
20. David STÖGMÜLLER (Austria)

ANNEX II

Work Plan 2023/2024

A. Implemented Activities

DATES	VENUE	DESCRIPTION
12 October	Warsaw	Participation of the new Chair, Dr. Daniela De Ridder, Vice-President of the OSCE PA in the 2023 Human Dimension Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remarks in Plenary Session VIII on Humanitarian Issues - Coordination meeting with ODIHR (Ms. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director; Ms. Julia Gebhard, Deputy Head, Democratization Department; and Ms. Alice Szczepanikova, Migration and Freedom of Movement Advisor)
3 November, 16:00-17:15 CET	<i>online</i>	Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration convened by the Dr. Daniela De Ridder, to discuss priorities and upcoming activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation by UNHCR Representative in Armenia Kavita Belani on the situation of refugees in Armenia.
9 November, 17:00-18:30 CET	<i>online</i>	Panel discussion on “ <i>Best practices and challenges regarding the sponsorship of refugees and the integration and settlement of newcomers to Canada</i> ”
18-20 November	Yerevan	21st OSCE PA Autumn Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report of the Chair to the Standing Committee (18 November) - Meeting of the Committee (19 November, 12:15-13:15) including a short report by President Pia Kauma and Special Representative on South Caucasus Kari Henriksen on their visit to the South Caucasus - Statement of the Chair to the OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum (20 November)
18 December	<i>online</i>	<u>Statement</u> on the occasion of International Migrants Day

B. Upcoming Activities

22-23 February	Vienna	23rd OSCE PA Winter Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Committee (22 February, 13:15-14:15), incl. remarks by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Dr. Kari Johnstone - Report of the Chair to the Joint Session of the Three General Committees (23 February)
5-8 March	Rome, Lampedusa	Field Visit to Italy (Rome, Lampedusa) , together with the OSCE PA Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime Eugenio Zoffili
tbd	<i>online</i>	Policy discussion/web dialogue (<i>topic tbd</i>)
May (2 nd half)	TBD	Field Visit to Türkiye
tbd	<i>online</i>	Policy discussion/web dialogue (<i>topic tbd</i>)
20 June	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day
29 June – 3 July	Bucharest	31st Annual Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report of the Chair - Meeting of the Committee - Supplementary Item (tbc)