



**NGOs and MEPs welcome New European Parliament guidelines to prevent that organisations and citizens helping migrants and refugees are criminalised and punished**

**“[We Are a Welcoming Europe](#)” European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) and MEPs both work towards a Europe where individuals and NGOs can uphold their right to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and migrants. [The European Parliament Resolution](#) on Guidelines for Member States to prevent humanitarian assistance from being criminalised is a welcomed step.**

The escalation of sanctions and intimidation of humanitarian workers, volunteers and civil society organisations and citizens that help migrants and refugees is becoming an alarming trend across Europe. Member States that do not differentiate between, smuggling in human beings or facilitation of irregular entry or stay and humanitarian assistance are putting ordinary citizens and actors that merely offer support to those in need at risk to become victims of widespread criminalisation.

This week, MEPs called on the Commission, both in a plenary debate and through a resolution voted on Thursday to urgently put forward guidelines for Member States to prevent humanitarian assistance from being criminalised. These guidelines would bring clarity and uniformity of implementation of the current legislation by specifying which forms of facilitation should not be criminalised by Member States.

The current legislation, the so called 2002 ‘Facilitation Directive’, requests Member States to adopt sanctions for persons who assist with irregular entry or irregular residence. The Directive provides, however, for an exemption if the assistance is humanitarian in nature. Today, only a quarter of the EU Member States have transposed this exemption clause into national legislation.

This European Parliament resolution is very timely – in the last month, Italy closed its ports to NGO boats carrying out vital search and rescue operations while Hungary’s Parliament passed a series of laws to criminalise individuals and NGOs that offer help to migrants and refugees. While millions across Europe have donated their time and stood in solidarity with migrants as part of the Refugees Welcome movement, volunteers and NGOs in Hungary will now face jail-time for doing the same humanitarian acts.

Criminalising our solidarity with migrants and refugees contributes to a shrink in civil society space and creates a hostile atmosphere for citizens and NGOs that practice their right to help those in need.

**Sign the [‘We Are a Welcoming Europe’](#) European Citizens’ Initiative and share on social media! [#HelpsNoCrime](#) [#WelcomingEurope](#)**

Hundreds of organisations across Europe have joined [We Are a Welcoming Europe](#) – the first European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) on migration to reclaim our right to help. The ECI is the EU’s official tool for its citizens to demand action and legislative changes if 1 million EU citizens sign the petition across seven EU member states.

[#WelcomingEurope](#) calls on member states to implement exemptions for non-profit and humanitarian assistance, as provided for in the 2002 “Facilitation” directive, and clarify which forms of facilitation should not be criminalised by member states. This would prevent EU member states from imposing sanctions on individuals or NGOs that provide humanitarian assistance.

**For more information about the campaign please contact Jules Bejot at [jbejot@migpolgroup.com](mailto:jbejot@migpolgroup.com)**

### Supporting MEPs

1. Claude MORAES (S&D)
2. Birgit SIPPEL (S&D)
3. Juan Fernando LOPEZ AGUILAR (S&D)
4. Nessa CHILDERS (S&D)
5. Péter NIEDERMÜLLER (S&D)
6. Ana Maria GOMES (S&D)
7. Judith SARGENTINI (Greens/EFA)
8. Renate WEBER (ALDE)
9. Liisa JAAKONSAARI (S&D)
10. Morten Helveg PETERSEN (ALDE)
11. Josef WEIDENHOLZER (S&D)
12. Sylvie GUILLAUME (S&D)
13. Marco AFFRONTI (Greens/EFA)
14. Emilian PAVEL (S&D)
15. Eva JOLY (Greens/EFA)
16. António MARINHO E PINTO (ALDE)
17. Dietmar KOSTER (S&D)
18. Martina MICHELS (GUE/NGL)
19. Jude KIRTON-DARLING (S&D)
20. Soraya POST (S&D)
21. Clare MOODY (S&D)
22. Costas MAVRIDES (S&D)
23. Molly SCOTT CATO (Greens/EFA)
24. Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA)
25. Pascal DURAND (Greens/EFA)
26. Cécile Kashetu KYENGE (S&D)
27. Philippe LAMBERTS (Greens/EFA)
28. Liliana RODRIGUES (S&D)
29. Eleonora FORENZA (GUE/NGL)
30. VAUTMANS Hilde (ALDE)
31. Christine REVAULT D'ALLONES BONNEFOY (S&D)
32. Tanja FAJON (S&D)
33. VALENCIANO Elena (S&D)
34. Ernest URTASUN Elena (S&D)
35. Bart STAES (Greens/EFA)
36. Sophie in 't VELD (ALDE)
37. Martina ANDERSON (GUE/NGL)
38. Lynn BOYLAN (GUE/NGL)
39. Matt CARTHY (GUE/NGL)
40. Liadh NI RIADA (GUE/NGL)
41. Ana MIRANDA (Greens/EFA)
42. Jean LAMBERT (Greens/EFA)
43. Julie WARD (S&D)
44. Elly SCHLEIN (S&D)
45. Michèle RIVASI (Greens/EFA)
46. Malin BJORK (GUE/NGL)
47. Eric ANDRIEU (S&D)

We are  
a welcoming  
Europe



**LET US  
HELP!**

48. Angelika MLINAR (ALDE)
49. Alessia Maria MOSCA (S&D)
50. Keith TAYLOR (Greens/EFA)
51. Merja KYLLÖNEN (GUE/NGL)
52. Lucy ANDERSON (S&D)
53. Sylvia-Yvonne KAUFMANN (S&D)
54. Sven GIEGOLD (Greens/EFA)
55. Younous OMARJEE (GUE/NGL)
56. Miguel URBAN CRESPO (GUE/NGL)
57. Marian HARKIN (ALDE)
58. TORRES MARTINEZ Estefania (GUE/NGL)
59. Eugen FREUND (S&D)
60. Bodil VALERO (Greens/EFA)
61. Ska KELLER (Greens/EFA)
62. Cornelia ERNST(GUE/NGL)
63. Linnéa ENGSTRÖM (Greens/EFA)
64. Benedek JÁVOR (Greens/EFA)
65. Jordi SOLÉ (Greens/EFA)
66. European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup