



FACTS MATTER: DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT MIGRATION

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Migration is not new, nor is it unusual. And when managed properly, it is nothing to fear. Yet, amid misinformation, untruths and fake news, it is sometimes hard to know what is actually going on when it comes to migration in Europe. From alarming rhetoric painting all migrants as terrorists and criminals, to inaccuracies and distortions about what the EU is doing, the debate is highly politicised. Fiction spreads like wildfire on social media and more often than not, facts get lost in all the noise.

Here are some of the most common myths about migration to Europe and the work of the EU debunked:



MYTH EUROPE IS EXPERIENCING A MIGRATION CRISIS.



FACT EUROPE IS NO LONGER IN CRISIS MODE.

- The number of arrivals is the lowest it has been in five years (150,000 in 2018). This is the result of joint EU efforts on all fronts.
- The majority of refugees and migrants remain in neighbouring countries. The EU works in partnership with third countries by helping them address the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration.



MYTH THE EU DOES NOT PROTECT ITS BORDERS.



FACT THE EU SUPPORTS NOT UNDERMINES NATIONAL BORDER PROTECTION.

- Europe's new Border and Coast Guard has around 900 border guards deployed to complement the existing capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border and coast guards. In addition, the Commission has proposed to create a standing corps of 10,000 border guards that would be at Member States' disposal to do just that: protect our borders.
- In the last 2 years, the Commission also proposed and the Council adopted new rules that are now in place and ensure that each and every person crossing the external borders is checked against all our security databases.
- The EU is working to disband criminal networks active in migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. Operation Sophia has apprehended over 151 suspected traffickers and smugglers and 551 vessels have been neutralised.



MYTH

THE EU TURNS A BLIND EYE ON THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS IN DETENTION CENTRES IN LIBYA.



FACT

THE EU IS WORKING TIRELESSLY TO EVACUATE MIGRANTS FROM LIBYA AND PUT A STOP TO DETENTION.

- It is a priority for the EU to put an end to the system of arbitrary detention and close the detention centres in Libya.
- We are working with the IOM and the UNHCR to evacuate refugees and migrants stranded in Libya. So far more than 37,000 migrants have received assistance to return from Libya to their country of origin and more than 2,500 people in need of international protection have been evacuated from Libya to a third country.
- Ensuring the protection of human rights of migrants is at the heart of the EU migration policy; this is regularly addressed in the constant EU dialogue with Libyan authorities; is a central part of EU training activities of the Libyan coastguards; and is the primary objective of EU supported activities in detention centres.



MYTH

THE EU RETURNS PEOPLE TO LIBYA.



FACT

EU OPERATIONS NEVER RETURN PEOPLE TO LIBYA.

- The EU does not practice push-backs and no migrants saved by European boats are ever returned to Libya.
- Our priority is to prevent people taking dangerous journeys in the first place and to provide protection and support to vulnerable people along migratory routes.



MYTH

THE EU LEAVES MEMBER STATES ALONE.



FACT

THE EU SUPPORTS ITS MEMBER STATES FINANCIALLY, OPERATIONALLY AND MATERIALLY.

- During the crisis, the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism provided immediate in-kind support. A total of 900,000 items such as blankets, beds and tents were provided to EU Member States and countries along the Western Balkan Route.
- The EU has mobilised unprecedented financial support to Member States facing increased pressure such as Greece (€2 billion), Italy (€885 million) and Spain (€708 million). The Commission has proposed to triple funding for migration management and border security to €34.9 billion under the next EU budget 2021-27, learning the lessons from the past when the EU had to use all the flexibility in the existing budget to mobilise an additional €3.9 billion that was urgently needed to tackle the crisis.
- The EU provides operational support to Member States with four EU naval operations, border guards from the European Border and Coast Guard, asylum officers from the European Asylum Support Office and security officers from Europol.



MYTH THE EU WANTS TO CREATE A FORTRESS EUROPE.



FACT THE EU IS NEITHER AN OPEN DOOR NOR A FORTRESS.

- The European Union is working to create an asylum system that is fair, effective and humane. We continue to offer refuge to those genuinely in need of protection, while returning those who do not have the right to stay in the EU.
- In the face of the most severe refugee crisis since the Second World War, Europe was the world's first responder. In 2016 alone, the EU granted asylum to and resettled over 720,000 refugees – three times as much as Australia, Canada and United States combined.
- Resettlement continues to offer a safe and legal pathway to those in need of international protection. Since 2015, two successful EU resettlement programmes have helped over 50,000 of the most vulnerable find shelter in the EU.



MYTH THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION CREATES A LEGAL RIGHT TO MIGRATE AND ENCOURAGES MIGRATION.



FACT THERE IS NO SECRET PLOT TO ENCOURAGE UNWANTED MIGRATION.

- The Global Compact is a non-binding document that aims to foster international cooperation.
- It is built around the concept that for migration to work for everyone, migrants as well as receiving societies, it needs to be safe, orderly and regular.
- It does not create a legal right to migrate, and it does not create any legal obligations for states. It restates what should be obvious: every human being is entitled to the same universal human rights, and migrants and refugees are no exception.



MYTH INTERNAL BORDERS ARE THE ONLY SOLUTION.



FACT THE REINSTATEMENT OF INTERNAL BORDER CONTROLS ARE A STEP BACK FOR EUROPE.

- The Schengen area is the largest free travel area in the world. It allows more than 400 million EU citizens, as well as visitors, to move freely, and goods and services to flow unhindered. It benefits people's lives and their livelihoods, our economy and our society.
- Not having Schengen costs: Just one hour of additional waiting time at internal borders could easily cost businesses €3 billion per year.
- Stronger protection of our external borders is what will allow us to get back to a fully-functioning Schengen area of no internal border controls.



MYTH

THE EU IS PREVENTING NGOS FROM SAVING LIVES AT SEA.



FACT

NGOS HAVE PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN SAVING LIVES AT SEA, SOMETHING THE EU COMMENDS.

- But all vessels operating in the Mediterranean must respect applicable laws. No boats are allowed to enter Libyan territorial waters without authorisation of the Libyan authorities. That's why the EU thinks it's preferable to work with the Libyan Coast Guard to enhance their capacity to carry out search and rescue operations in their zone of responsibility, where most search and rescue incidents occur.
- What the EU is doing is trying to save lives and break the business model of smugglers. EU operations have saved close to 730,000 lives at sea.
- Our objective is clear: we have to stem irregular flows and replace them with legal and orderly migration.



MYTH

THE EU PREVENTS THE RETURN OF MIGRANTS WHO COMMIT CRIMES.



FACT

STRICT EU RULES ENSURE MIGRANT CRIMINALS SEE THEIR STATUS WITHDRAWN.

- Like anyone else, if migrants commit crimes they face sanctions under criminal law.
- EU law allows Member States to reject an asylum application or withdraw refugee status, if the individual is a danger to the security of a Member State or has been convicted of a particularly serious crime.
- The Commission has proposed to strengthen these rules further to make it obligatory for Member States to act in these cases.
- With no status such individuals have no right to stay in Europe and must be returned to their countries of origin.



MYTH

MIGRANTS CARRY DISEASE.



FACT

THE IDEA THAT MIGRANTS CARRY DISEASE HAS NO BASIS IN FACT.

- While there can be health risks associated with migration and travel, including from Europe, there have been no pandemics linked to migration in recent years.



MYTH

MIGRANTS ARE A BURDEN ON ECONOMIES.



FACT

MIGRANTS GENERALLY CONTRIBUTE MORE TO SOCIETIES THAN THEY TAKE AWAY.

- When managed properly migration brings many benefits, it fuels economic growth in countries of origin and arrival, it enriches our societies and cultural exchange can foster peace – the European Union is a case in point.
- Migrants and refugees contribute to economies both as employees and as entrepreneurs, working in public services and creating new businesses.



MYTH

THE EU IS OUTSOURCING ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT ITS BORDERS TO THIRD COUNTRIES.



FACT

MIGRATION HAS BECOME FIRMLY EMBEDDED IN OVERALL RELATIONS WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS, BUT NOT WITH THE AIM OF OUTSOURCING RESPONSIBILITY.

- The work with our partners is based on the principle of genuine partnership of equals and it is undertaken in view of addressing joint challenges.
- This includes improving border management capacities, but also providing protection and support to vulnerable people, saving lives at sea, fighting against trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, and improving local economies and livelihoods.



MYTH

EU MIGRATION FUNDS FINANCE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES.



FACT

EU FUNDS GO TO PEOPLE IN NEED NOT TO GOVERNMENTS.

- The beneficiaries of the EU's Trust Fund for Africa, for example, are migrants and forcibly displaced people, their host communities and communities of origin. In 2018, almost 90% of funds contracted went to development organisations, UN organisations and NGOs.
- Not a single cent goes into the hands of authoritarian regimes.
- EU support is also subject to strict monitoring and standards. The European Parliament, the 28 Member States and the Court of Auditors track every euro spent.