

- ***European Parliament***, December 1st, 2020, Asylum: MEPs call for a sustainable solidarity mechanism among EU member states

The European Parliament LIBE committee (Civil Liberties) adopted a draft resolution calling for the establishment of a ‘solidarity-based mechanism’, commenting that the Dublin III Regulation imposes a ‘disproportionate responsibility on a minority of member states, in particular when high numbers of arrivals occur’. This draft targeted especially European southern countries: Greece, Italy, Malta, Cyprus and Spain. The rapporteur, Fabienne Keller, stated ‘the EU asylum policy could be much more efficient and humane by dedicating more attention and resources to the proper implementation of existing rules at national and local levels. We can act now, without waiting for the adoption of the Asylum-Migration New Pact’. Among southern EU member states, Malta has been one of the more vocal advocates for more ‘burden-sharing’ and pushing forward the concept of solidarity on EU agenda.

- ***Malta Today***, December 4th, 2020, Return to the Med: sea rescuers MOAS in collaboration with Sea-Eye

Sea rescue NGOs Sea-Eye and Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) have agreed to a partnership aboard the Sea-Eye 4 humanitarian vessel, supposed to start its rescue mission in February 2021. MOAS will support Sea-Eye with professional staff, joint search and rescue training, strategic expertise and an international donation campaign. Created in 2013 by Regina Catrambone, MOAS was one of the first aid organizations rescuing people in the Central Mediterranean, especially active in Malta.

- ***Malta Today***, December 9th, 2020, Withhold business visas for countries that do not readmit failed asylum seekers - Bartolo

Maltese foreign Minister Evarist Bartolo appealed UNHCR to process asylum claims in Libya and other African countries to ‘ensure migrants are treated humanely and with dignity and remove the risk of an arduous journey to reach Europe’, echoing the EU’s 2018 proposal for regional disembarkation platforms in northern Africa. He also called on the EU to withhold visas for non-EU countries that don’t wish to cooperate in re-admitting their nationals when rejected from the European asylum system. The Minister’s allocations came up a few months after the Memorandum of Understanding that Malta signed with Libya, calling on the EU and its member states to enhance their financial support to Libya to ‘secure’ its southern border and maritime coast. Also, Malta doesn’t have enough diplomatic weight to negotiate and secure as many readmission agreements with countries of origin as the country would like on a bilateral basis, which is why Bartolo is counting on the EU to help the island send rejected asylum-seekers back to their country of origin or to so-called transit countries.

- ***Times of Malta***, December 10th, 2020, Malta ‘complicit’ in Libya rights violations

Amnesty International’s Regional Director for Europe and former CoE Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muiznieks has warned that Malta’s cooperation with Libya over migration makes the island complicit in the violation of human rights in the north African country. He also repeated Europe’s responsibility in refraining from pushing people to a war-torn country where they are more than likely to face serious human rights violations. Because of Memoranda of Understanding that Italy and Malta have been signing with Libya since the 2000’s and the EU’s financial support, these three stakeholders are considered as ‘complicit’ in the human rights violations. Muiznieks also expressed concerns regarding the Maltese tendency to use private vessels to push people back to Libya.

- ***Infomigrants***, December 23rd, 2020, 270 migrants transferred from Malta this year
- ***IOM Malta website***, December 22nd, 2020, EU Voluntary Relocations from Malta Top 270 People in 2020 amid COVID-19

The International Organization for Migration has officially helped for the relocation of 270 people from Malta to other EU member states in 2020. Less than a quarter of these people were women. 28 of them were children under 12, as EU countries seem to be more open to welcoming single male adult, which certainly does affect a part of asylum seekers who want to be relocated from Malta. According to NGOs on the ground, AWAS, the Maltese Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers, allegedly promised some unaccompanied minors a relocation in another EU member states if they would give up on their age minority assessment and therefore renounce the protection due to them. The agency is not involved in the relocation procedures in any manner whatsoever. The relocated asylum seekers were mostly sent to France, Finland, Romania and Germany. The authorities also indicated that another group would be likely to be relocated to Spain at the beginning of 2021.