



A Planet Without Borders

Building a Pillar on Migration Policy

White Paper

DiEM25 Task Force for Migration Policy

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List of Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CRM	Critical Raw Materials
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EGD	European Green Deal
EIB	European Investment Bank
EJC	Environmental Justice Commission
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
ESRA	European Search and Rescue Agency
ETS	Emissions Trading System
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GNDE	Green New Deal for Europe
GPW	Green Public Works
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISDS	Investor-State Dispute Settlement
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MEM	Mineral Energy Materials
MNC	Multinational Corporations
MS	Member States
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
UCS	Unilateral Coercive Sanctions
WB	World Bank

Preface

DiEM25 is a pan-European movement of democrats, united under the conviction that a democratised and non-aligned Europe will be a positive force on our planet. A Europe that is able to prioritise people over profit, life over death, health over wealth. This transition needs to take place now!

Migration is often portrayed as a crisis, but it is not migrants who create crises; rather, they are the direct consequence of political, economic, and environmental turmoil. These destabilising forces are often fuelled by policies from Europe and the Global North that prioritise profit over people, leading to displacement and despair for countless individuals. It is time to confront these realities and reframe our approach to migration with justice, equity, and responsibility.

This paper presents DiEM25's comprehensive vision for a humane and equitable migration policy rooted in the principles of solidarity, environmental sustainability, and anti-imperialism.

Our policy seeks to dismantle the exploitative structures that drive forced migration, promoting fair trade, climate justice, and democratic accountability in all aspects of migration governance. We call on Europe to lead with compassion, to honour the rights and dignity of all people, and to support policies that empower both migrants and host communities.

We have a legal, moral and historical duty towards our fellow human beings seeking migration to Europe, to them, we say, welcome! And to Europeans that are hosting them, we say – we salute you and support you! Our common humanity binds us more than divides us!

It is thus vital to overcome the false distinction between political/economic migrants and refugees which leads to discriminatory policies, deprives people of agency and forces them into underemployment and exploitation.

Through this policy framework, we aim to transform Europe's approach to migration by:

- Acknowledging and addressing the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, environmental degradation, and economic exploitation.
- Prioritising policies that support equitable development and reduce dependency in the Global South, breaking the cycles of poverty and forced migration.
- Ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their origin, are welcomed with dignity, and that migration policies enhance, rather than undermine, human rights and environmental sustainability.

About Policy Pillars

Policy development forms part of our activism at DiEM25. We put forward alternative policy mechanisms that aim to work for the many, not the few. These policies are more than ideals; they offer practical pathways to systemic change. Our positions are aligned with our [Manifesto](#) and are developed through a participatory approach involving our membership and subject matter experts.

To achieve our vision, we form alliances with local communities, transnational organisations, and grassroots movements, challenging entrenched power structures. Our political parties, [MERA25's](#), localise these policy ideas and contest key elections to dispel the myth that "There Is No Alternative."

The proposals in this paper are ambitious because they must match the scale of the crises we face. Incremental reforms have repeatedly fallen short in addressing the root causes of critical challenges that humanity faces. This paper, [along with our other policy pillars](#), call for transformative action rooted in a commitment to human dignity, shared prosperity, and solidarity across borders.

These policies challenge Europe's entrenched geopolitical and economic interests, recognising that true security and prosperity are built not on dominance or exploitation, but on justice. Europe's long-term interests lie in a world defined by peace, cooperation, and shared responsibility. By embracing fair and accountable policies, Europe has the opportunity to lead by example and foster global resilience.

Practical pathways to implementation already exist. Piloting local initiatives, such as strengthening host communities, facilitating community-led projects, and supporting worker cooperatives can deliver immediate, scalable results. In times of economic, environmental, and geopolitical uncertainty, the power of community collaboration can build resilience, foster solidarity, and strengthen bonds within and across borders. This paper offers Europe a path to redefine its global role, moving beyond exploitative structures toward a future grounded in collective well-being and peace.

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An Alternative Migration Policy

DiEM25 proposes a holistic approach to migration that grants people their rights, addresses root causes of forced migration, tackles structural defects and aims for socioeconomic uplift of host communities throughout Europe. This requires acceptance of full responsibility towards our fellow humanity which would serve as a clear political foundation for coexistence of all. Movement of people is an integral part of human history and presents the opportunity to think beyond limited national outlooks and fear mongering identity politics.

Forced migrants should no longer be presented as passive victims or criminals who also steal jobs. They should be centred as political actors questioning the injustice and dysfunction of the current world order. We must, at all times, bear in mind our internationalist vision and moral obligations to all those who seek our shores and facilitate settlements of our fellow human beings amongst us, just as we have in the past gone to their shores – and may yet again given the fast-approaching climate calamity that will hit Europe hard.

A Crisis in the Making: Consequences of Political Failure

Europe's share of refugees, compared to its overall population, is only 1.5%. Yet we are facing a crisis: funding a FRONTEX border agency that monitors drowning in the Mediterranean; hosting refugee camps with no running water in Greece; offshoring asylum applications in contravention of international law. The list goes on. The European Union – unable to unify around its humanitarian duty – has chosen a haphazard policy path instead: dividing humanity into those we want vs. those we reject.

Those fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine are rightfully granted refuge, permitted to work and provided access to healthcare and education. In contrast, those outside Europe face enormous risks to reach the continent and no mention is made of root causes of their flight. No statements made of European arms destroying life in the Middle East. No comments on steadfast support for dictators across the globe. No acknowledgment of colonialism and its enduring structures in the 21st century. No recognition of our role in creating climate refugees. No link made to unfair trade relations. Europe's role in creating the conditions that force people to leave their homes is often overlooked, yet it is deeply embedded in a system that prioritises profit, resource extraction, and geopolitical control over human welfare and environmental sustainability.

Europe perceives migration from the Global South as destabilising modernity and undermining its core ideas on nation and nationalism, identity, civil society, sovereignty and citizenship. It treats refugees and migrants as suspect, and uses counter-terrorism measures - surveillance and control, biometrics and data collection - against them. Its other key defences include exclusion (walls, detention and deportation) and externalisation of borders, ignoring its search and rescue responsibility. Militarisation, new technology, authoritarian bombast, criminalisation of civil disobedience and solidarity are also essential elements. The European Union continues to blindly 'manage' the crisis and instrumentalise forced migration for its own political benefit.

Hypocrisy Governs the Rules - Europe's Selective Humanitarianism

The Ukraine War has spotlighted the racism and double standards endemic in our European Structures. Faced with millions of White Christian European refugees, they enabled sidestepping of the cumbersome asylum system and granted Ukrainians the refuge they needed. All Member States (MS) provide solidarity and resettlement drama-free. Equally important, these refugees are being portrayed as educated, intelligent and cultured, their identities and past are unquestioned and they are not stereotyped as potential terrorists or infiltrators. There is no fog of distance or sense of otherness: Ukrainians are White and European. The contrast with people of colour, who managed to escape Ukraine, couldn't be greater. They were barred from evacuation trains, segregated, made to wait for days at the border and sometimes pushed back. Those that made it to the European Union faced higher hurdles; their permits were questioned and they were pushed to return to their countries of origin.

For those outside Europe, a securitised regime, in which they are already criminalised, awaits them. Politicians and the media use their platforms to demonise those seeking refuge in Europe. Those migrants of colour who, against all odds, have arrived in Europe, begin another journey to navigate an alienating asylum system. A daily life of confinement and limited work and educational opportunities begins. Those fortunate enough to be granted asylum – usually after months or even years of waiting – find their relief short-lived. Work, housing, education, health – indeed life! - continues to be scarce. The hypocrisy could not be clearer. Europe's migration policies are blatantly racist. Europe's actions reveal a policy framework driven by economic gain and security interests, often at the expense of the very values it claims to uphold. By militarising its borders, fuelling conflicts abroad, and supporting despots in the Global South, Europe has lost all credibility as a defender of human rights and democracy. Europe profits from the wars

and conflicts that force people to flee, only to refuse them entry when they arrive seeking safety. Europe profits from the very forces that drive displacement—unequal trade, resource extraction, and support for hegemonic geopolitical control—yet turns away those impacted by these practices.

Instruments of Oppression: The EU's Betrayal of Human Rights

Issues pertaining to asylum seekers and migration are a 'shared competence' in the European Union and are thus subject to overlapping policy instruments. These are however being harmonised through the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. This includes:

- Uniform rules on screening non-EU nationals that will:
 - Increase rates of detention since too little time – 7 days – will be provided for screening.
 - Decrease application of human rights as it treats arrivals as 'not having entered the EU' despite their physical presence on EU territory – the so called 'legal fiction of non-entry'.
- Create a common database of biometric information for non-EU nationals aged 6 and over.
- Streamline procedures related to borders, asylum claims and returns, including:
 - Legalising discrimination based on nationality: border procedures will apply to people from countries with an international protection recognition rate under 20%, those from 'safe countries of origin' or 'safe third countries', for national security reasons and/or for withholding information. They are thus kept in detention with fewer safeguards and access to legal support than the 'normal asylum procedure'.
 - Expediting deportation: lodging an appeal against a deportation does not pause the process. Thus, an asylum seeker can be deported while their appeal is ongoing.
 - Punishing the vulnerable: Families with children are not exempted from the border procedure. This means that they can be kept in detention for lengthy periods pending their case.

- Establish a solidarity mechanism to balance responsibilities across the EU. Thus, under the Regulation on Asylum Migration Management (RAMM), the EU wants to:
 - Maintain the first-country of entry principle, meaning that frontline EU member states will continue bearing the brunt of arrivals – exacerbating the already disastrous host ‘facilities’ in those countries.
 - Commodify solidarity by non-frontier countries who pay into an EU fund instead of accepting asylum seekers. This fund, in turn, could help pay for border walls, fences and surveillance technology.
 - Tear families apart by excluding siblings for protections normally granted through family reunification.
- Introduce temporary ‘crisis’ opt-outs allowing Member States to break international obligations at will.

All of these policy interventions do nothing to eliminate existing concerns – from the failed hotspot system to systematic human rights abuse under the watchful eyes of FRONTEX. The latter in fact has seen enormous budget increases, an eye-watering 2763% since its founding in 2006 – and has been a hotbed of corporate lobbying eager to sell security and surveillance system to further ‘protect’ Europe. From drones and biometric data collection to satellite imagery and artificial intelligence, these technologies form a sophisticated surveillance network that tracks and restricts the movement of migrants. Developed by European defence companies, these technologies are often sold to oppressive regimes, where they are used to monitor, detain, and oppress citizens and migrants alike. Europe’s embrace of these tools aligns with a security-first approach that criminalises migration, treating people in need as threats rather than as individuals with rights and dignity.

Civil society has been critical of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Human rights organisations, charities, academics and activist have decried the inhumanity of this policy package and have called for urgent reconsideration of its constituent components.

History, unfortunately, indicates that the European Union is determined to keep the ‘garden’ safe from the ‘jungle’. As we witnessed in 2015, the EU designated Greece’s Aegean islands as hotspots to mandatorily and indefinitely detain migrants. Athens expanded its detention facilities and built a wall, based on the Melilla model, at the Evros River to harden its border with Turkey, with whom the EU has had an externalisation agreement since 2016. Hungary built a security fence and closed its border with Serbia; it now indefinitely detains migrants in transit zones.

Internal border controls were also imposed, walls built or refugees refused under redistribution plans by: Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Croatia received 100M€ from the EU in 2018 to patrol its longest external border. Even now thousands remain stranded in Bosnia's crowded Vucjak camp, a snake-infested site littered with landmines, lacking electricity or sanitation, and built on a methane-emitting chemical dump.

Another policy innovation has been further externalisation into North Africa and the Sahel. We are not just witnessing further EU funded and led militarisation of borders within those regions but outsourcing of asylum claims processing to those locations.

Since 2015, by threatening cuts to assistance, the EU has subdued Ethiopia, Niger, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan - sometimes against the will of their own people. Secret negotiations have blindsided civil society and many Africans remain unaware of their governments' actions in service to the EU. Despite the rhetoric, it is externalisation that forces migrants into smugglers hands to pass checkpoints, cross borders and fences, escape prisons and ultimately board small dangerous boats.

The EU thus prefers – as a matter of policy – to send detainees captured in Libya to transit processing centres across the Sahel, mostly in Niger, which has abolished freedom of movement and made transporting migrants a crime. Europe's externalisation in Algeria has closed its borders even to its own citizens, and prevented west and central Africans from entering Libya: officials force them to walk through the desert into Niger. This is a largely unknown tragedy that the EU is creating: twice as many die in the Sahara as in the Mediterranean while smugglers, whose business also funds terrorism, are enriched.

The ring of externalisation stretches further. Tunisia has been forced to criminalise attempted emigration to Europe without valid documents. The Democratic Republic of Congo has introduced unaffordable-to-most 160.00€ biometric passports produced by an Arab-Belgian consortium. Sudan builds new border posts and Morocco accepts deportees, even non-citizens. Egypt deploys soldiers to block migration routes while Senegal allows European officers to take command. In West Africa, the EU's policy of strengthening border controls of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) members disrupts seasonal and circular migration, contravenes the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement, and fuels abuse and extortion by border guards. It slows development and weakens economic coping mechanisms.

Policy Response - Creating a Humane Migration Framework

- **End the Externalisation of European Union Borders:** Terminate European Union migration control agreements that outsource border enforcement to authoritarian regimes, including, but not limited to, the EU-Turkey, EU-Sudan, EU-Tunisia, and EU-Libya migration agreements. This policy ensures that Europe takes direct responsibility for upholding human rights and ends its complicity in abuses by third-party states, shifting focus from containment to cooperation and dignity.
- **Transform FRONTEX into a European Search and Rescue Agency (ESRA):** Replace FRONTEX's militarised mandate with a humanitarian mission, redefining it as the European Search and Rescue Agency. ESRA would focus on saving migrant lives at sea and on land, providing safe passage through humanitarian corridors for refugees, and upholding the EU's commitment to human rights. This change promotes safety, shifts resources from exclusion to protection, and positions Europe as a leader in humanitarian migration policy.
- **Abolish Deportation and Detention Laws, Especially for Vulnerable Groups:** End policies that allow for the deportation and administrative detention of migrants, with particular emphasis on protecting vulnerable groups. Leverage existing EU provisions to issue humanitarian visas directly in countries of origin or refuge, including for those affected by climate change. This approach respects the dignity of migrants, facilitates safe pathways for those seeking refuge, and aligns with Europe's commitment to human rights.
- **Reduce Barriers to Family Reunification for Migrants:** Simplify administrative procedures for family reunification, especially for children, and eliminate stringent language requirements that often prevent families from joining their loved ones. This policy strengthens family integrity, protects vulnerable individuals, and emphasises the importance of family unity in migration policy.
- **Increase Protections for Children and Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum:** Ensure that children and unaccompanied minors have immediate access to critical services, including education, healthcare, and family reunification in Europe. Prioritise these individuals' safety, development, and integration within host communities, establishing Europe as a protector of children's rights and well-being.

- **Strengthen Frameworks to Locate and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking and Missing Children:**

Implement robust systems to locate and assist victims of human trafficking, as well as child and adolescent migrants who go missing after entering Europe. This framework reinforces Europe's role in combatting trafficking, safeguarding vulnerable individuals, and supporting survivors' recovery and reintegration.

- **Replace Migrant Camps with Reception and Hospitality Centres Based on Respect and Dignity:**

Shut down detention-style migrant camps and establish reception and hospitality centres that meet the immediate needs of new arrivals in a dignified manner. Ensure systematic protection for all refugees from discrimination, violence, harassment, and abuse while they are in Europe's care. This policy promotes humane treatment, fosters safety, and upholds Europe's commitment to justice and compassion in its migration policies.

Marginalised and Exploited: The Reality of Migrants in Europe

Whether irregular or having been granted asylum status, equality is hard to achieve. Employment and accommodation often remain unobtainable. Underpaid, repetitive and often manual work is usually the only option. Substandard yet expensive accommodation is the only choice.

Irregular migrants are especially prone to exploitation as they are living in Europe's shadows, the hidden face of our neoliberal economic system, taking jobs that are dirty, degrading and dangerous but a vital part of many key sectors. Many carry out low or non-skilled work in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, hospitality and food services, in positions that are labour-intensive and low-skilled with low wages and limited labour protections.

Unscrupulous employers take advantage of these migrants' limited options and lack of legal protections by paying lower wages and subjecting them to poor working conditions below minimum legal and employment standards. The constant risk of detention and deportation is used as leverage by these bosses. Migrants have no guarantee they will even be paid, with wage theft and withholding payments commonplace. The absence of fair employment opportunities leaves migrants vulnerable to exploitation, fuelling a shadow economy that benefits employers at the expense of human dignity. Policies that restrict migrants' access to secure work and equal labour rights deny them the opportunity to participate fully in society and trap them in cycles of poverty.

Furthermore, they are exposed to heightened risk of coercion by criminal organisations into involvement in the drug trade or forced sex work, or even enslaved. New refugees, who lose their monthly asylum-seeker cash and shelter support, are also being forced into these exploitative situations.

As these migrants are not registered in social systems, they cannot use official job centres. Work is found through word of mouth, social networks or day labour centres.

The undocumented cannot receive benefits with the gravest result being food poverty, which is also hitting asylum seekers harder than citizens. Women, especially mothers, have found their needs ignored. More than two million asylum seekers are not entitled to mainstream financial services (such as bank accounts) or legal work. Most receive only small stipends beyond basic housing and food.

Their poverty intersects with inadequate living conditions in deprived areas and deteriorating mental and physical health at a time when loss of civil society funding has meant losing safe spaces where they can find support and learning opportunities, socialise and gain a sense of belonging. In many European cities, migrants and asylum seekers are relegated to overcrowded, under-resourced neighbourhoods or temporary shelters, where they are often isolated from the broader community. In some cases, migrants face segregation policies that limit their access to quality housing, further marginalising them and creating conditions that can breed resentment and xenophobia. This exclusion not only affects their quality of life but also hinders integration, as stable housing is a critical foundation for economic and social participation.

Access to healthcare and education is similarly restricted, with many migrants facing bureaucratic hurdles that limit or deny their access to these essential services. This exclusion violates fundamental rights and denies individuals the chance to lead healthy and productive lives. Without access to proper healthcare, migrants are more vulnerable to illness and hardship, impacting not only their well-being but also the public health of their host communities. Education barriers further limit migrants' potential and hinder their ability to contribute meaningfully to society, while also affecting the development and integration of migrant children.

Generally, efforts to reduce the protection gaps for irregular migrant workers face two fundamental challenges. First, how and to what extent can “the law” be used to protect people who live and work “outside the law”? Second, how can irregular migrants' access and realise their fundamental rights in a meaningful way when their irregular residence status makes them liable to deportation? These two questions, which relate to the limits of legal protection and the tension between the promotion of rights and immigration control policies, are at the heart of policy debates about the rights of irregular migrant workers.

Some national, regional and local administrations seek to improve the day-to-day conditions of irregular migrants, including by:

- Permitting claims of compensation of unpaid wages – though claims are rare since irregular migrants face difficulties in dealing with authorities.
- Granting exemptions from arrest and detention when seeking employment, as is the case in Ireland.
- Regularising of graduates from institutions of higher education as practiced in Germany or those that wish to be trained to fill skill shortages as in Spain.

While plenty more examples exist, these policy approaches are not harmonised across Europe, and are mostly designed to address business problems or labour shortages. Politicians and right-wing groups are otherwise content to spread their anti-migrant scorn and racist messages. The media adds fuel to the fire, truth no longer enables genuine discussion and debate, and governments are put under massive pressure to reject migrants.

Policy Response: Safeguarding Migrants' Rights and Dignity

- **End Arbitrary Distinctions Between Types of Migration:** Eliminate restrictive categories such as “safe third country” and “first country of asylum” to ensure fundamental rights for all migrants, regardless of their status. This includes:
 - **Full Economic and Social Rights:** Grant all migrants the right to work and unionise without restrictions, access to social security and pensions, pathways to permanent residence and naturalisation, and access to housing and healthcare, including trauma counselling and mental health support.
 - **Full Civil and Political Rights:** Remove all barriers preventing migrants from participating in electoral politics, ensuring they have a voice in democratic processes.
 - **Freedom of Movement and Access to Justice:** Guarantee freedom of movement within Europe and provide free legal representation for all migrants to uphold fair treatment under the law.
- **Establish Unrestricted Access to Life and Work Opportunities:** Ensure that all migrants have equitable access to resources that support professional and personal growth by:
 - **Expediting Recognition of Foreign Credentials:** Streamline processes for recognising foreign educational and professional qualifications.
 - **Providing Vocational Training and Language Courses:** Offer free tailored programs to facilitate migrants' integration, enhance employability, and support professional development.
 - **Building Intercultural Competency in Public and Private Sectors:** Foster inclusive workplaces and communities by strengthening intercultural skills among employees in both the public and private sectors.

- **Ensure European-Wide Standards for Migrant Worker Rights and Protections:** Implement European-wide legislation granting all migrant workers, regardless of status, the right to fair wages, safe working conditions, and protection from exploitation. Create accessible systems to report wage theft and workplace abuses without fear of deportation or detention, harmonising protections to value migrants' contributions and support economic justice.
- **Expand Financial Access and Support for Migrants and Asylum Seekers:** Mandate that all member states allow migrants and asylum seekers to open basic bank accounts and access essential financial services. This access would provide financial stability, help prevent exploitation, and foster inclusion in the formal economy.
- **Strengthen Gender Equality in Migration and Asylum Policies:** Integrate gender-sensitive policies across all aspects of migration, ensuring comprehensive support for women and gender-diverse individuals:
 - **Recognise Gender-Based Grounds for Refugee Status:** Include gender-based persecution as a legitimate basis for refugee claims.
 - **Provide Gender-Sensitive Facilities and Services:** Offer gender-segregated sleeping and sanitation facilities upon request and ensure female interviewers and interpreters for women seeking protection.
 - **Expand Trauma Support and Childcare Services:** Make trauma therapy available to all asylum seekers, with specific support for survivors of gender-based violence, and provide quality childcare during screenings and interviews.
 - **Enable Independent Legal Status:** Allow migrants to claim asylum or secure legal status independently of their spouse, promoting autonomy and safety.
- **Guarantee Universal Healthcare for All Migrants:** Ensure all migrants have access to comprehensive healthcare services, including preventive care, mental health support, and trauma services, by removing administrative barriers. This universal access promotes the well-being of migrants and strengthens public health in host communities.
- **Promote Inclusive Housing Policies for Migrants:** Develop housing programs that provide migrants with stable, quality housing, integrated within broader communities rather than in isolated or overcrowded areas. Facilitating access to dignified housing promotes social cohesion and supports long-term integration.

- **Facilitate Mutual Recognition of Asylum Decisions Across Europe:** Pass legislation enabling the swift and automatic recognition of positive asylum decisions throughout Europe, allowing migrants with protected status to move and settle where opportunities align with their needs. This harmonised approach enhances stability and allows migrants to contribute effectively to society.

Host Communities Under Strain: Meeting the needs of Local Communities

We are witness to European governments settling newcomers in regions of economic decline, leaving them in a state of need and disempowerment. Due in part to the so called “Hot Spot” system, regions suffering under austerity measures and poor communities in richer European states bear the brunt of hosting migrants.

By heightening tensions and pitting one group against another, xenophobic attitudes emerge – leading to a steady stream of support for inhumane politics that seek to build walls around Europe. Structural racism, historically embedded at all levels of government, reinforces exclusion and criminalisation. People are racialised in different degrees and ways. At the local level, racialised boundaries become more visible and harm community cohesion.

Thus, austerity and migration control lead to societal polarisation and authoritarian forces use that to divide society further and gain power. This is dangerous both in the short and long term as it leads to violence and undermines democracy.

In other words, it is long term disinvestment in employment, education and public health services that are responsible for the problems newcomers and locals face in host communities- not migration.

We prioritise democracy, acknowledging that it is civil society and local people who engage in the fight for rights and overcoming the institutional barriers to inclusion. They are aware of the challenges and needs of their localities, they know what needs to be done and how to do it. Therefore, concrete policies and implementable measures must be generated through a participatory process which also centres them.

Nevertheless, forced migrants need not be only beneficiaries of help, they are political actors on equal footing with host community members. Without their participation, no analysis of community needs, proposal of concrete measures, or implementation can be effective or complete.

Policy Response: Empowering Host Communities and Migrants Together

To restore and strengthen host communities, we propose the following:

- **Repeal the Dublin System and Abolish the "Hot-Spot" Approach:** Replace the failed Dublin system and dismantle the "hot-spot" apparatus with a centralised mechanism for the equitable relocation of migrants across European communities. This system would consider both the preferences of newcomers—such as family ties, language, and cultural connections—and the capacities of host communities. Aligning migrant preferences with local needs fosters balanced integration, supports community resilience, and enhances social cohesion.
- **Facilitate Locally-Driven Worker Cooperatives for Migrants and Host Communities:** Provide training, resources, and funding to support the creation of worker cooperatives driven by migrants and host community members. These cooperatives would promote local economic resilience, address labour shortages, and encourage cross-cultural collaboration, offering stable, dignified employment and shared prosperity for all community members.
- **Establish Inclusive Assemblies for Democratic Decision-Making:** Create Assemblies inclusive of all stakeholders—across European, national, and local levels—to enable organised political expression for both migrants and host communities. These assemblies, selected through sortition, would facilitate community-wide participation in decisions that impact their lives. This democratic engagement fosters social cohesion, builds trust, and deepens integration by centring community voices.
- **Support Community Hubs for Cultural and Educational Exchange:** Permanently fund community hubs within host regions where migrants and local residents can engage in joint cultural, social, and educational activities. These hubs would serve as spaces for language exchange, skill-sharing workshops, and mutual support, promoting understanding, reducing isolation, and facilitating smoother integration through shared experiences and cultural mediation.
- **Develop Youth Programs for Cross-Cultural Exchange and Empathy Building:** Create specialised programs that pair young migrants with local peers across primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as after-school initiatives. These programs

foster cross-cultural friendships, encourage cultural exchange, and build empathy, helping to cultivate a more inclusive, understanding, and unified next generation.

- **Replace Detention Centres with Social Housing for Shared Living:** Shut down migrant detention centres and facilitate relocation to socialised housing designed for both migrants and low-income community members. This policy reduces human suffering, promotes stability, and fosters integration through shared living spaces, enhancing social connections within the community.
- **Empower Civil Society and Support the Social Solidarity Economy:** Strengthen civil society by providing financial, institutional, and operational support to grassroots solidarity initiatives, especially in communities hosting forced migrants. This approach builds local resilience, strengthens inclusivity, and enables community-driven projects that benefit everyone. It also inspires European civil society to engage in decentralised actions that actively include newcomers, creating meaningful, localised pathways to integration and shared growth.

The Invisible Hand of the Oligarchy: The Structural Drivers of Forced Migration

For the vast majority, migration to the first world is impossible. Thousands however 'choose' a perilous path to reach European shores, with multitude dying preventable deaths enroute. While a variety of reasons may drive people to embark on this journey, what chiefly concerns us are the root causes that force people to risk their lives to reach Europe.

European elites have always pursued their own prosperity at the cost of impoverishing the Global South: colonial expansion through dispossession was often considered State sport as Africans were enslaved, shipped across the world to be worked to death, while their home countries were left open to conquest.

Originating in the battle for Empire, intensified by capitalist accumulation and globalisation, forced migration is now a key facet of the neo-liberal system. Irregular migrants support the entire global labour chain: demeaned and dehumanised, they are vulnerable, deportable, disposable, a docile and a steady source of cheap labour.

The system continues to create climate crises, vulnerability, violence, precarity, weak social and governing structures. For working people throughout the Global South, neoliberalism means debt, wage stagnation, rising costs of living and downward mobility. It means dramatically deepened social and economic inequality, political exclusion and cultural invisibility. This pressure leads to forced migration to Europe in pursuit of better livelihoods.

Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, and Imperialism: Shaping the Landscape of Migration

For hundreds of years before neoliberalism, European colonialism created displacement and migration through genocide, slavery, conquest and land theft, indentureship, labour exploitation and subjugation, capitalist extraction, commodification, pollution, oppression, military violence, and war profiteering. This legacy of destruction laid the foundation for much of the global inequality we see today, where the economic and environmental costs of colonialism continue to burden the Global South.

Post-colonialism encompasses European power relations with its remaining and former possessions, the creation and dominance of global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). Neoliberalism, emerging in the late 20th century,

intensified the exploitation initiated by colonialism, shifting colonial structures into new forms of global economic and political control. Today, corporate-driven trade policies, structural adjustment programs, and debt dependency continue the imperialist project by impoverishing the Global South, with former colonies still bound to exploitative systems of economic dependency.

Contemporary imperialism is marked by not only the economic control exerted by multinational corporations and financial institutions but also the increasing use of Unilateral Coercive Sanctions (UCS) by Western powers, particularly the US and European Union, to enforce political and economic agendas. These sanctions are often imposed without international legal authorization and are used as tools of imperial domination, furthering the economic and social destabilisation of targeted countries. UCS are deployed to weaken sovereign governments, restrict trade, and hinder economic development, often exacerbating poverty and social unrest in the countries affected. They are particularly devastating in regions already struggling with the legacies of colonialism, such as Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

The impacts of colonialism were not limited to the economic and political spheres. Indigenous cultures, languages, and knowledge systems were systematically destroyed or marginalised. The forced assimilation policies imposed by colonisers left deep scars in societies, affecting both personal identities and collective social structures. The loss of autonomy over cultural expression and governance continues to affect many former colonies, contributing to ongoing struggles for cultural revival and recognition.

In Africa for example, former colonisers maintain their hold through economic dependency, climate debt, and military domination. Ongoing corporate assaults and resource exploitation continue to impoverish and displace many communities in the ongoing pursuit of bauxite, coal, cobalt, coltan, copper, diamonds, gold, iron, oil, uranium, and zinc. These resources, extracted for the benefit of multinational corporations, often lead to environmental devastation, displacing indigenous communities and contributing to the climate crisis.

World Bank development projects also displace millions; in Africa, 11 projects have grabbed 700,000 hectares of land. On top of this, Africa is home to almost half of all land grabs by agribusiness, with greenwashing exacerbating this issue. Green grabs—land appropriation for conservation, carbon sequestration, and biofuel production—combine the social and economic devastation of natural resource extraction with violence caused by armed struggles, social conflicts, repression, external interventions, human rights violations, loss of citizenship, and civil

wars. They displace indigenous societies and farmers, remove land from customary property tenure, distort social systems, and erode women's access to common land.

The legacy of colonialism persists in today's neocolonial practices, where former colonies are still economically exploited through foreign-controlled supply chains, international trade agreements, and debt servicing. These ongoing practices maintain global power imbalances, keeping the wealth of the Global North intact while stifling economic development in the South. As global wealth continues to be extracted, these systems further entrench the inequalities created during the colonial era, sustaining the exploitation of people and resources in the Global South.

Modern imperialism also includes military interventions that target sovereign nations under the guise of "humanitarian" or "democratic" efforts, often resulting in widespread instability and loss of life. From the wars in the Middle East to the militarisation of borders in Africa, Western powers use military force to secure geopolitical interests, control resources, and suppress resistance movements. These interventions have led to the destabilisation of entire regions, furthering cycles of conflict, displacement, and poverty.

Policy Response: Decolonising Migration

- **Acknowledge and Apologise for the Crimes of Colonization:** Fully and transparently recognise and apologise for the crimes of colonization—including slavery, resource exploitation, cultural destruction, and forced displacement—through an official, binding process of apology and reparations. This process would include the return of all stolen resources, historical artifacts, and lands still held in European possession. A reparations mechanism, guided by a fair body akin to the European Justice Commission (EJC) in DiEM25's Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE), should involve input from affected communities. Reparations must also extend to climate reparations, addressing environmental harm caused by colonial-era resource extraction and ongoing exploitation.
- **End the Use of Unilateral Sanctions and Coercive Measures:** Cease imposing unilateral sanctions and coercive economic measures on Global South countries. Replace these with multilateral frameworks grounded in human rights and democratic principles, ensuring that economic decisions respect national sovereignty and self-determination.
- **Establish a Global Anti-Imperialist Justice Commission:** Create a commission to investigate and dismantle imperialist structures—including exploitative multinational

corporations, trade agreements, and financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. Reducing dependency on these structures enables sustainable development and fosters a cooperative, rather than exploitative, global economic system.

- **Support Intergenerational Healing Through Cultural and Mental Health Programs:** Allocate funds to mental health and educational programs that address intergenerational trauma and cultural dislocation caused by colonialism. Support initiatives in cultural heritage preservation, language revitalisation, and community-led mental health services. These programs empower communities to reconnect with their heritage, fostering cultural resilience and social cohesion.
- **Implement Radical Cultural Reform to Dismantle Xenophobic Narratives:** Reform educational and media systems in Europe to prioritise studies on colonialism, decolonization, and the contributions of diverse cultures to global development. Amplify non-European voices, dismantle harmful stereotypes, and promote inclusive narratives in schools and media. This shift encourages a more inclusive, anti-racist society and dismantles long-standing stereotypes, promoting multicultural values.
- **Sign and Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers' Rights:** Ensure that Europe upholds the rights of all migrant workers by signing and ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, securing protections and fair treatment for migrant communities.
- **Establish a Debt Cancellation Framework for Global South Countries:** Develop a debt cancellation framework that eliminates debts of Global South countries incurred under exploitative conditions. Additionally, reimburse previously paid debts that meet these criteria. Debt cancellation alleviates economic pressure, supports poverty alleviation, and enables countries to invest in social and environmental resilience without the burden of debt servicing.

Unjust Trade Practices: Economic Exploitation and Migration

At the heart of Europe's unfair trade relations is the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) of the European Union which penalises farmers in the Global South and worsens the climate crisisⁱ. Massive subsidies generate huge surpluses by encouraging factory farming and high-yield breeding. 72% of its budget (€30B) is spent on direct payments to farmers, with 80% going to the top 20 producers.

While 33% of the EU's total spending goes to CAP and its payments make up half the average farmer's income, in the Global South the EU is dismantling government subsidies and maintaining open markets for agribusiness through Economic Partnership Agreementsⁱⁱ (EPAs) and other free trade deals.

An explicit goal is increasing EU exports in high volume sectors like meat and dairy: cheap and unregulated, they overwhelm local markets and marginalise small producers leading to uncontrolled and unsustainable urban migration and explosion in the number of food-insecure urban poor. Remaining farmers become dependent on global agribusiness both for inputs and as buyers, since they lack direct market access. With MNCs (multinational corporations) dictating prices and conditions, they become indebted or compelled to sell their land to large-scale mechanised operations.

Poverty generating EPAs are produced in contexts characterised by deep power imbalances, divide and rule tactics, and corporate influence. "Partners" are prevented from protecting local industries and developing the capacity to export high value finished goods, reinforcing the colonial and neocolonial dynamic of ignoring subsistence needs, exporting raw materials to feed European industries and importing back processed goods. EPAs impose trade liberalisation and tariff dismantling on countries unready to compete with European business. They prevent sustainable development, disrupt domestic markets and industrialisationⁱⁱⁱ prospects, reduce customs revenues from tariffs, lock in unequal asymmetrical economic relationships and prioritise EU interests in countering irregular migration.

While operating under different arrangements, Latin American trade relations^{iv} with the EU have always been similarly unequal: the region also exports commodities and depends heavily on imported manufactured industrial goods. The EU accesses natural resources^v but devastates the local population, destroys habitat, contributes to the climate crisis and maintains dependency. It supports the extraction industry where violation of human rights^{vi} and labour

standards are common, and mining expansion that leads to increased conflicts amongst local populations, corporations and governments^{vii}. There is little transparency and limited civil society or community participation in policy making in the EU or Latin America - business-friendly policies will never consider development, human rights, environmental or migration implications.

Policy Response: Ending Exploitative Structures

- **Transform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** End subsidies that favour large-scale industrial farming and lead to surplus exports that harm Global South farmers. Redirect CAP funds to support sustainable, small-scale, agroecological practices in Europe and abroad, fostering biodiversity and resilience in local food systems. This approach reduces market distortion, aligns EU policies with sustainability goals, and creates a level playing field for Global South farmers.
- **Implement a Common Food Policy Supporting Global South Food Systems:** Integrate a common food policy that ensures EU trade agreements support sustainable food systems in the Global South. Limit exports that disrupt domestic markets and support climate-resilient agricultural practices, safeguarding food sovereignty, promoting sustainable farming, and strengthening local food systems.
- **Abolish Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) Mechanisms:** Remove ISDS clauses from trade agreements and replace them with community-centred dispute systems prioritising environmental justice and public welfare. This empowers local communities to challenge harmful corporate practices without fear of reprisal, protecting sovereignty and preventing corporate dominance over local policies.
- **Mandate Technology Transfer Agreements in Key Sectors:** Require technology transfer agreements from the Global North to the Global South in areas such as renewable energy and healthcare, ensuring access to advanced technology without restrictive licensing. Technology transfer promotes sustainable industrialisation, supports local innovation, and reduces dependency on Northern corporations.
- **Outlaw Land Acquisitions by European Corporations under the Guise of Conservation:** Ban land acquisitions by European corporations in the Global South, often justified as "conservation" or "carbon offsetting." Establish a global framework to protect customary land tenure and enable communities to retain sovereignty over their land, preventing displacement, supporting biodiversity, and fostering sustainable natural resource management.

- **Promote Regional Economic Self-Sufficiency in the Global South:** Support regional economic self-sufficiency by prioritising local industries, food sovereignty, and regional trade over export-oriented models. Facilitate regional agreements that allow countries to trade on fair terms, focusing on meeting local needs first. This approach reduces dependency on the Global North, builds resilience against market fluctuations, and fosters regional solidarity.
- **Establish Sovereign Regional Financial Institutions Free from IMF/World Bank Conditions:** Create regional financial institutions in the Global South that provide financing for social welfare, infrastructure, and sustainability projects, without the austerity conditions imposed by the IMF or World Bank. Financial sovereignty allows countries to pursue development based on local needs, fostering strong, self-reliant economies.
- **Enshrine the Right of Global South Nations to Control Natural Resources:** Recognise and protect the sovereignty of Global South nations over their natural resources, prohibiting foreign corporations from exploiting resources without fair compensation and local ownership. Nationalise critical sectors and establish profit-sharing mechanisms for local communities, ensuring that profits remain in local communities and supporting sustainable development.
- **Redefine Global Trade Relations:**
 - **Close Tax Havens and Enforce Fair Taxation:** Require profits to be taxed where they are generated, closing tax loopholes that drain resources from the Global South.
 - **Rewrite the Samoa Agreement:** Revise the Samoa Agreement to empower partners to protect local industries, export finished goods, and develop knowledge sectors.
 - **Separate Migration Control from Trade Agreements:** Exclude migration control clauses from economic agreements, focusing trade policy on economic and development goals rather than migration deterrence.
 - **Cease Funding for Resource Extraction That Displaces Populations:** Halt European funding for natural resource extraction projects that displace communities, prioritising local development over corporate interests.

- o Provide Compensation for Environmental Degradation: Mandate that corporations compensate local communities for environmental harm caused by their operations, holding them accountable for impacts on people and ecosystems.
- o Ensure Inclusive Trade Policy Development: Implement inclusive and transparent trade policy development processes that involve civil society and community stakeholders from the Global South. This approach aligns trade policies with human rights, local development, and environmental sustainability, building trust and accountability in global trade relations.

Climate Injustice: The Environmental Triggers of Displacement

Colonisation encompassed the atmospheric commons: industrial expansion and energy overconsumption were based on exploiting 'free' natural capital. Everything was commodified; carbon stored for millennia in trees and underground was plundered and GHGs emitted. Desperate to preserve the status quo, neoliberals now claim business champions science, but European industry will only stop emitting CO² when it becomes unprofitable.

Despite currently producing only 8% of global carbon emissions, the EU's cumulative emissions since the Industrial Revolution make it the second biggest polluter of all time at 22%. Fossil fuels remain deeply embedded in its economies: the majority of MS are oil and gas producers, in Poland coal is still King while in Germany it is an addiction. Europe, overall, is the third largest global GHG emitter, with Germany producing the largest share as the EU's biggest coal consumer. At COP26 Denmark, France and Germany agreed to restrict public financing for unabated coal power by 2030; Poland reneged on the deal and set 2049 as its new target.

EU subsidies for hard coal and lignite, oil and gas take many forms: direct payments, tax breaks and exemptions, the capacity market^{viii} and the Emissions Trading System (ETS). The fossil fuel industry received over €123B just in 2022 through direct subsidies, tax breaks and exemptions.

Guided by the fossil fuel industry, the EU is now pursuing liquified natural gas (LNG) as a bridge to green energy even though it is a dirty fuel, with worse methane emissions than even coal^{ix} and transitioning will intensify the greenhouse effect by 40%.

Despite the EU's European Green Deal (EGD) net zero rhetoric, the EU has made little progress on climate and energy targets; instead, greenhouse gas (GHG) intensity of energy use has increased, further exacerbated by animal husbandry and animal food crop cultivation. While attempting to reassert global leadership, the EU continues to drive the crisis: it blames the Global South for the consequences of its own ongoing economic activities and provides minimal support for a green transition. Meanwhile, intersecting with and accelerating other drivers of displacement, climate-induced migration is happening now. People are escaping hurricanes and flash floods, or areas made uninhabitable by drought or rising seas.

The EGD also requires more mined critical raw materials (CRM) from Africa where trade in all mineral energy materials (MEMs) is growing. Mining for CRM is already destroying communities, causing deforestation and desertification, polluting rivers, and reviving slavery-like conditions.

Projected demand will lead to more labour abuses and land right disputes, accelerate environmental devastation, compound climate disruptions, import Europe's carbon emissions, reinforce technology dependencies and force migration.

Greenwashed as nature-based solutions, the EU's unsustainable crop biofuel policies violate social justice principles and worsen the climate crisis. EU demand for cheap biodiesel has led to the deforestation of 4M hectares in Asia and South America. European drivers have burned 39M tonnes of palm and soy biodiesel since 2010, emitting 3 times more CO² than diesel; by 2030 this will rise to 173M tonnes. Funding and market incentives have created a cash stampede of governments, investors and corporations that have devastating consequences for the Global South.

Designating biofuel as a sustainable investment has led to the development of mega-projects with high social and environmental costs for the poorest and most vulnerable people including land rights disputes that cause migration.

Carbon trading is another faux nature-based status quo solution that generates migration. The idea is that emissions generated somewhere can be 'offset' by removing them from the atmosphere elsewhere, or by storing them underground. But the EU ETS' emit, offset and capture logic is neocolonial climate injustice in a new guise. It enables further ecological breakdown by incentivising deregulation, commodifying land and forest resources, even the air we breathe.

Even while failing to meet its climate finance commitments and with its way of life coming at the Global South's expense, Europe scapegoat's high emissions countries like India and ignores their challenges. Its demand drives the crisis: stuck in their role as raw material producer, many Global South countries cannot make a green transition without equally lucrative alternative development. EU MS, IMF, and the World Bank continue financing fossil fuel projects in the Global South; the EU is spending \$100B. After China, Germany is the second largest fossil fuel investor in Africa, providing \$500M annually, mostly in North Africa and Nigeria, where its MNC Siemens is involved in gas production. Italy invests \$300M annually in countries where its oil firm ENI operates. After the World Bank, the second and third largest multilateral donors are the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), who invest a combined \$800M annually. The Africa-EU Energy Partnership also prioritises fossil fuel, doubling both LNG production and exports to the EU.

The climate crisis is reinforcing and amplifying inequalities. The Global South, with the lowest emissions, bears 90% of the costs and 98% of the deaths due to fires, floods, drought, famine,

disease and displacement. It is worst affected by more frequent and intense drought, heatwaves, floods, sea level rise and storms; the hottest places suffer most from rising temperatures and climate variability. Coastal fisheries and communities are among the most vulnerable: as seas warm and acidify, marine ecosystems suffer. The poorest emit the least but suffer the worst economic losses, water scarcity and food insecurity - impeding development and inducing migration.

Policy Response: Addressing Climate Inequities in Migration

DiEM25's comprehensive Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE) outlines 85 policy interventions to address the climate crisis, including measures such as:

- **End Policy Support and Subsidies for Fossil Fuels:** Cease all policy support and subsidies for fossil fuels and other carbon-positive industries. Implement measures to penalise fossil fuel investments by both public and private sectors, as envisioned in DiEM25's Green New Deal for Europe.
- **Expand Unconditional Climate Finance and Technology Transfer to the Global South:** Provide climate finance and technology transfer support to the Global South, independent of mitigation and adaptation aid. Avoid scapegoating high-emissions countries in the Global South and respect their sovereignty in determining the pace of their own transition.
- **Establish the Green Public Works (GPW) Agency:** Create a public investment agency that channels Europe's resources into green transition projects across the continent, promoting sustainable infrastructure, renewable energy, and environmental restoration.
- **Tie GPW Funding to Sustainable Public Procurement Standards:** Require that all GPW funding complies with strict public procurement criteria that prioritise green materials, fossil-free energy, and community wealth building. Ensure funding is issued only to authorities that commit to fundamental principles of democracy, transparency, and sustainability.
- **Reform Global Prudential Standards to Penalise Fossil Fuel Investments:** Intervene in the design of global prudential standards, such as the Basel framework, to introduce punitive capital requirements for investments in fossil fuel-intensive and environmentally destructive projects and businesses.

- **Introduce an Environmental Abuse Directive:** Recognise environmental destruction as a threat to human and non-human life by codifying civil liability for contributing to climate and environmental damage. Impose personal and punitive liability on those who profit from pollution, holding them accountable for environmental harm.
- **Establish an Environmental Justice Commission (EJC):** Create a commission to monitor and enforce the principles of the GNDE, with a focus on environmental justice:
 - **Empower the EJC to Investigate Environmental Justice Issues:** Enable the EJC to investigate environmental justice concerns and propose recommendations to legislative bodies within Europe and beyond.
 - **Address the International Dimension of Environmental Justice:** Direct the EJC to examine global environmental justice issues, including international trade relations and regulations governing transnational corporations.
 - **Focus on Intergenerational Justice:** Ensure that the EJC addresses past injustices while promoting measures that secure a habitable world for future generations.

In addition to these GNDE proposals, DiEM25 emphasises the need for a just green transition funded by the wealthiest, beginning with the top 1%, who hold nearly a third of all wealth in Europe.

Complicity in Authoritarianism: The EU's Support for Dictators

The EU's renewed focus on controlling migration, particularly from Africa, includes alliances, aid and weaponry allowing dictators to expand their power and professionalise their security apparatus. The most cooperative regimes are those that profit most: authoritarian or totalitarian ones such as Egypt^x, Eritrea^{xi}, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Libya.

Although the EU's agreements contain a democracy and human rights clause, in most cases it pursues enhanced cooperation in aid and trade with autocrats^{xii}. In 2018 and 2019 undemocratic regimes received 84% of its development aid with no governance strings attached. Unfree elections are also ignored. Although Thailand's 2019 unfair election solidified the military's power, it unblocked talks on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). After the government stole the 2017 Kenyan election, the EU increased aid by €4.5B. In 2015 aid to Ethiopia increased even after the regime claimed to win 100% of the seats in its parliamentary election and clamped down further on civil society. Pakistan, Bangladesh and Egypt similarly enjoyed carte blanche for their unfair elections.

Despite the EU code of conduct on arms sales, MS have increased exports of military equipment to dictatorial regimes and sales of dual-use technology used for digital surveillance of activists. Among others, it's sold to Azerbaijan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Syria, Libya and Saudi Arabia. Now as the EU pivots to migration control, almost no dictator is too murderous to support, no government too atrocious to deal with. Europe's anti-migrant defences include a network of willing tyrants doing the dirty work hidden from European public accountability but openly at home, further empowered by European aid, weaponry and training. Ironically, the oppressive policies of these authoritarian and corrupt regimes spur more coerced migration.

Profiting from Conflict: The Arms Trade and its Impact

The European arms trade causes widespread destruction and instability and provokes mass displacement. People are forced to flee, sometimes to Europe, causing it to further militarise migrant routes and fortify borders, generating ever more profits for the industry. Arms export realpolitik involves political, economic and industrial concerns: national imperialism and supremacy, regional and global hegemony, jobs and corporate profits are the real priorities, not fundamental rights and certainly not refugees and migrants.

Supporting global competitiveness of the military and so-called security industry is an EU objective. Defence and arms trading are considered strategic national sectors integral to technological advancement and job creation. In addition, the EU is increasing its military muscle and deepening hard security collaboration amongst Member States, including joint armament projects via Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO), expanding EU military capacity through the Rapid Deployment Capacity and fast-tracking funds for weapons.

Critically, as it has been shown in practice, prohibitions on arms exports are not taken seriously. Weapons are sold to warring countries leading to destabilisation and internal displacement – even though both the European Common Position and the UN Arms Trade Treaty prohibit sales to human rights violators. Wars have significant climate impacts – almost triple emissions of civil aviation and marine shipping combined.

Arguing domestic sales cannot maintain a robust sector, governments are deeply involved in winning export contracts; heavy industry investment means they profit when they grant export licenses. Cumulatively, the EU is the world's second largest arms dealer at 26% of global sales, behind only the US at 36% and ahead of Russia at 21%. France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands feature strongly in the arms dealer lists.

Much of this trade is poorly monitored and many sales go virtually unchecked. France^{xiii} believes its strategic autonomy depends on arms sales, Germany's^{xiv} industry is a near monopoly with operatives embedded in government and the military, Spain's^{xv} arms sector is a key pillar of its economy and it exports to nearly all countries involved in armed conflicts that flout international human rights norms. Italy's^{xvi} client list is also full of repressive regimes.

Arms dealing, conflict and the war on migrants are extremely lucrative: even post-pandemic, international sales are at Cold War heights with Saudi Arabia^{xvii}, Egypt^{xviii} and Qatar^{xix} remaining top customers. Since 2015, these countries - along with Bahrain^{xx} and the UAE^{xxi} - have been part of a coalition against the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen, in a proxy war between Riyadh and Tehran that has caused famine. Although both the UN and European Parliament have urged a ban on arms sales to Saudi Arabia, there is no EU embargo.

Five of the world's largest arms manufacturers are based in the EU: trans-European Airbus, French Thales and Naval Group, Italian Leonardo and German Rheinmetall. In their business model, profits are made twice: first when selling weapons of mass displacement and second by selling products and services to prevent refugees from entering fortress Europe. The border security side of the industry makes massive profits from arms licensing and exports; the growing market is forecast to be worth €58B by 2025.

Policy Response: Ending Complicity in Authoritarianism and Conflict Profiteering

- **Replace Neo-Colonial Power Relations with Balanced Partnerships:** Transform current trade practices, power relations, and development aid mechanisms into balanced partnerships that prioritise social, environmental, and economic justice. Align trade and aid policies with DiEM25's principles, emphasising fair cooperation and ethical governance. Establishing these partnerships strengthens local sovereignty, reduces dependency, and prioritises global equality over European economic interests.
- **Enforce a Complete Ban on Arms Industry Lobbying:** Prohibit lobbying by the arms industry at all levels of European government to eliminate corporate influence over arms exports, defence funding, and foreign policy. Ensuring that policies prioritise public interest over profit reduces the arms industry's impact on decision-making and promotes peace.
- **Defend Rule of Law and Civil Liberties Against Surveillance Technology:** Protect democratic rights and civil liberties by banning the development, use and export of surveillance and press-restricting technologies. This limits the Europe's role in empowering regimes that suppress civil rights.
- **Negotiate a new International Convention for the Elimination of War Industry:** Pioneer efforts for a global convention aimed at phasing out arms manufacturing and redirecting resources toward climate action and sustainability. This agreement should include clear timelines to end arms production and convert facilities to non-military uses, fostering a global shift toward peace and environmental resilience.
- **Implement a Just Transition Program for Arms Industry Workers:** Develop a transition program to retrain arms industry workers for green-sector jobs, including in renewable energy, healthcare, and social services. Financial and career support would help workers transition smoothly, ensuring job security while shifting toward a sustainable economy oriented around social well-being.
- **Ban Arms Trade:** Halt and subsequently ban trade of armaments, parts, technical cooperation and associated services. This would naturally include a binding arms export embargo on countries with ongoing conflicts, human rights abuses, or authoritarian governments. Establish an independent body to monitor compliance, imposing strict

penalties for violations. This embargo prevents European arms from fuelling conflicts, protecting civilian lives and promoting peace.

- **Redirect State Funding from Weapons Manufacturing to Peaceful Industries:** Halt state funding for weapons manufacturing and redirect these resources to green industries, healthcare, education, and infrastructure projects. Ending arms subsidies promotes job creation in peaceful sectors, reduces EU involvement in global arms proliferation, and strengthens communities.
- **Manage Conflicts Through a Transformed United Nations:** Commit to conflict resolution through a reformed UN, transferring the planning and control of European military and civilian missions to the UN. Strengthening the UN's role supports a multilateral approach to peace and stability, reducing the EU's reliance on military solutions.
- **Cultivate a "Culture of Peace" in Education, Media, and Research:** Prioritise the creation of a new "Culture of Peace" through education, journalism and research, while deprioritising the logic of militarised security as envisioned under PESCO as well as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union. Moving away from militarisation promotes human security and resilience, addressing conflicts without relying on military solutions. While a culture of peace in education and media helps shift societal norms, preparing future generations to value conflict resolution over militarization.
- **Foster Non-Alignment and Withdraw from NATO:** Reorientate Europe away from competing power blocks, and focus political resources on securing a New Non-Aligned Movement that centres peace as the basis of international cooperation. This, in practice, means withdrawal from NATO and dismantling of NATO structures in Europe. Exiting NATO and fostering non-alignment reduces military entanglements, supports sovereignty, and positions Europe as a global advocate for peace and diplomacy.

Unite for a Just and Dignified Migration Policy

Europe's policies—rooted in neo-colonialism, economic exploitation, militarisation, environmental injustice, and alliances with oppressive regimes—continue to force millions into perilous journeys. It's time to acknowledge this reality and act decisively. We call on the people and progressive forces of Europe and beyond to unite for a profound transformation that transcends borders:

- **Confront and Dismantle Imperialist Legacies:** Recognise Europe's role in colonial exploitation and modern neo-colonialism. This means ending extractive practices, unfair trade agreements, and authoritarian alliances that destabilise regions and uproot lives. This includes reparations for the Global South, restoring resources, lands, and livelihoods taken in the name of empire.
- **Commit to Non-Alignment and Global Justice:** Europe must break with militarised alliances and imperial agendas, adopting a stance of non-alignment that prioritises peace, cooperation, and solidarity with oppressed peoples.
- **Build Policies of Solidarity, Not Exclusion:** Shift from militarised borders to compassionate policies that dismantle systems criminalising migration and support both migrants and host communities in a spirit of mutual aid. Policies should prioritise community-led initiatives, support for worker cooperatives, and structures that empower local economies to thrive without exploitation.
- **Champion Climate and Economic Justice for All:** End Europe's role in the global climate crisis by prioritising policies that respect human rights and uplift communities over enriching corporations. Advocate for policies that support the Global South's sovereignty and self-sufficiency, empowering these communities to thrive independently of exploitative trade practices.

Europe is at a critical juncture. We can either continue down a path of division or rise together to build a future rooted in liberation, solidarity, justice, and peace. Let this be our collective mission: to make a world without borders possible; to dismantle the exploitation that drives displacement; and to create a Europe that embodies our shared humanity.

The world cannot wait. Engage with us, stand in solidarity, and be part of a transformative movement for justice and humanity—building a world where dignity knows no borders.

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Endnotes

i CAP contributes to the injection of palm oil in milk powder, exports that undermine local production and destabilise fragile economies, and the expansion of the ecologically destructive soybean model in Latin America - Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay account for 50.6% of world output.

ii The ACP-EU Partnership of 2000, also known as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement covers trade with 79 former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It establishes the framework for negotiating stand-alone WTO-compatible development-oriented free trade deals, known as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) which are now at various points in the ratification and implementation process. Though meant to run only until 2020, the post-Cotonou agreement is now in limbo, awaiting approval. EPAs remain under its governance, but many African countries remain reluctant to allow any reference to them.

iii The ESA (East and Southern Africa) and SADC (Southern African Development Community) EPAs have caused a 51.2% and 32.3% decrease in manufactured exports to the EU. There has been an overall increase in EU exports to members of the SADC EPA; and an increase in agricultural exports to SADC, ESA and the Pacific.

iv There is a complicated network of association and trade agreements between the EU and CELAC falling in 4 categories: trade blocks (Mercosur and CARIFORUM), multiparty regional agreements (Central America and Andes), free trade agreements (FTAs) with individual countries (Chile and Mexico) and an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the Caribbean. These agreements have both geopolitical and strategic significance and are increasingly dynamic. Like the Cotonou EPAs, the agreements are in various stages of negotiation and implementation while trade continues.

v Both left and right wing Latin America governments base their development plans on resource extraction, believing it will generate economic prosperity. 13 Latin American countries are among the world's top 15 providers of mineral resources. However, as mining frontiers expand, vulnerable ecosystems are endangered and investor-friendly legislation weakens environmental standards.

vi Peru now employs the military to crush social protest and use of weapons against activists is unpunished. As Ecuador ramps up mining operations, it restricts NGO involvement in political matters. NGOs demanding indigenous rights are shut down and environmental defenders are often criminalised, treated like terrorists or even murdered. At least 144 were killed in 2019 in Latin America, with Colombia first at 64 murders. Of 24 murders in Brazil, 90% occurred in the Amazon. 18 people were killed in Mexico and 14 in Honduras.

vii In Peru alone there are over 100 water and land-use conflicts related to mining. In many places water and soil pollution has led to lead and arsenic contamination for people living near mines. Furthermore, water access is often a privilege granted to corporations over local communities who are then unable to continue farming. Pollution caused by the transportation of concentrate from mines is another major issue.

viii Capacity markets ensure supply by securing commitments for future power generation. An auction for government contracts, they are used as a loophole to continue subsidising coal, oil and gas. 98% of contracts go to fossil fuel and nuclear power, 66% just to coal plants. Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden either have or are planning one. Portugal dismantled its capacity market after realising excess energy was already produced and didn't need to be subsidised. According to the EC, the entire EU has over-capacity. These markets also bolster fossil fuel industry profits by supporting conversion from coal to gas instead of renewable energy, by tying governments to long inflexible contracts, and excluding innovative technology. In Poland, 80% of capacity contracts have gone to inefficient coal power plants, enabling them to receive public subsidies until the late 2030s; they will receive €14B between 2016 and 2030 alone.

iX Since 2010, the fossil fuel industry has spent over €250M on lobbyists, access and influence. Climate change denial has been replaced by weakening and sabotaging legislation. Because it emits less carbon than oil or coal, it now spins LNG as a bridge to green energy. But it is a dirty fuel, with worse methane emissions than coal: over 20 years, it is 80 times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere.

X In Egypt 10,000s of people including journalists, dissenters and members of the LGBTQIA community are subject to police brutality, tortured in military prisons, forcefully disappeared and extrajudicially executed, or collectively sentenced to death at mass trials. Other critical voices are silenced with threats, travel restrictions and confiscations. Despite this, Egyptian military dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi received the *Legion d'Honneur* in 2020. France is Egypt's top arms supplier and a crucial financier: its arms are used to repress dissent and exports lack human rights conditionality. Greece, under both Syriza and New Democracy governments, has also acted as Egypt's advocate. In 2018 an untied EU loan of €500M was announced.

XI Although the European Commission plans to 'de-commit', it has approved €120M for anti-migration projects in Eritrea since 2020, including €20M for a forced labor road construction project. Under the cruel regime of President Isaias Afewerki, young people fear lifelong military service, inhabitants are monitored, people trying to escape are shot at the border, and families are threatened with jail to extort 'tax' from citizens living abroad. Paid less than €30/month, soldiers serve in Tigray, along the Ethiopian border or provide labor for road construction, in quarries or on mega projects like hydroelectric dams. Afewerki controls a massive security and secret service apparatus with worldwide reach which he uses to keep the people in a permanent state of fear.

XII Over the past decade, the EU has provided budget support to human rights abusers such as Egypt, Laos, Morocco, Myanmar, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Uganda and Vietnam. It continues to offer funding to countries that are becoming more autocratic - like Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Mali and Serbia. In 2021, the EU cancelled its financial sanctions on the Burundian government and resumed aid, and France has renewed financial cooperation despite its poor human rights situation. France also ramped up its financial and counterterrorism military support to the autocratic President Idriss Déby of Chad until his death in 2021.

XIII France believes its strategic autonomy depends on arms sales: to remain independent, it must have its own weapons manufacturing capacity. Its political and military leaders contend that without exports, France's armed forces cannot afford the latest weaponry. They adamantly oppose relying on the US for defence needs, not least because purchases would require congressional authorisation. A vast bureaucracy exists just to promote arms exports, in doing so it preserves its own scope and influence. To maintain its position, France is now pursuing a large European defence fund, new European financial instruments to acquire arms, an internal market regulation against external dependency and looser export restrictions.

XIV German companies have merged to near monopolies. Competition is limited and 30% of contracts are awarded through single tender/bidder processes; to protect key technologies state contracts are directly awarded. The civil service lacks the staff and expertise to evaluate bids so relies on defence industry consultancies and research institutes; it depends on suppliers to design tender documents and evaluate products. In 2018 and 2019, under 1% of arms export applications were denied: 88 out of 11,000 in 2018 and 56 of 9,900 in 2019. Industry officials are embedded in the military, and a revolving door keeps consultants moving between the public and private sectors. Meanwhile, the industry funds and directs think tanks and trade associations by appointing its senior operatives to their steering committees. The Deputies' Act allows MPs to take lucrative side jobs, rules are lax and conflict of interest penalties inadequate. Industry contributions to election campaigns are unlimited and support of party events and conferences is allowed. Federal Government secrecy on security and defence strategy development and planning prevents public engagement and meaningful scrutiny and further empowers lobbyists and campaigners. Parliament is engaged at the earliest planning stage, then later after major decisions have been made.

xv At 1% of GDP, Spain's arms industry is a key pillar of its economy. Spain exports arms to nearly all countries involved in armed conflicts that flout international human rights norms: Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Turkey and the UAE. Morocco is also a client, buying €3.9M in ammunition and explosive devices. Spain is now also a leading exporter of police and riot gear to regimes facing mass social opposition to austerity, militarism and malign neglect in the face of Covid19. In 2020, these products earned €719,026, 931% more than 2019. The world's 10th poorest country, Togo, bought 80% with a €575,685 contract. Dynastic ruler, President Faure Gnassingbe needs the new equipment to confront strikes and protests against his rule. Tunisia was the second largest customer for this equipment.

xvi Italy's client list also includes Bahrain, Turkmenistan, Somalia, South Sudan and the UAE. Overall, 56.1% of export licenses are issued to Third Countries who, for five years running, have been Italy's main customers.

xvii Saudi Arabia was France's biggest customer in 2020 and 2021 (€704M and €703M). Spain has earned €1.7B from the Saudi-led coalition since 2015. In 2021 Saudi Arabia was its fifth largest buyer at €54.3M and without parliamentary approval, private contractors training Saudi soldiers were using army facilities. In 2020, it issued 26 export licenses worth €215M. In 2019, it granted 22 export licenses and sales soared to €392.78M, up 2870% over 2018. 97% of these contracts are with the Saudi Armed Forces. Navantia is also building five corvettes worth €1.8B for the Saudi Navy. Saudi Arabia's Italian licenses are worth €144.4M but 50% of Italian exports go to its coalition and are worth €3B annually. Italy halted the sale of thousands of missiles to Saudi Arabia in January 2021. However, 2019 export restrictions were lifted to ease diplomatic tensions and ensure ongoing access to the al Minhad air base and civilian contracts. Despite Germany's arms embargo, it still supplies components for trans-European projects, making it possible for missile maker MBDA to deliver weapons to the Saudi air force.

xviii In 2021 Egypt purchased 30 Rafale jet fighters (worth €40B) from France. Egypt is Germany's second largest client and Italy's top customer with licenses worth €991.2M, and a new arms deal including frigates, Eurofighter Typhoons and a military satellite in the works.

xix Qatar's Italian licenses are valued at €212M.

xx In 2019 Spain authorised €14,520 in export licenses to Bahrain and €812,181 in 2018. Bahrain has perpetrating grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Yemen using Spanish weapons.

xxi Spain remains the UAE's fifth largest supplier. Its 2021 exports were worth €8.2M. In 2019, Spain sold it €94M worth of armaments used in Yemen even though UAE troops have perpetrated grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law like enforced disappearances and torture using Spanish weapons. Italy halted the sale of thousands of missiles to the UAE in January 2021.