



# **Migration, European policies, and social movements. The «trap of permanent emergency»**

**EUROMEMO CONFERENCE**

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## Introduction

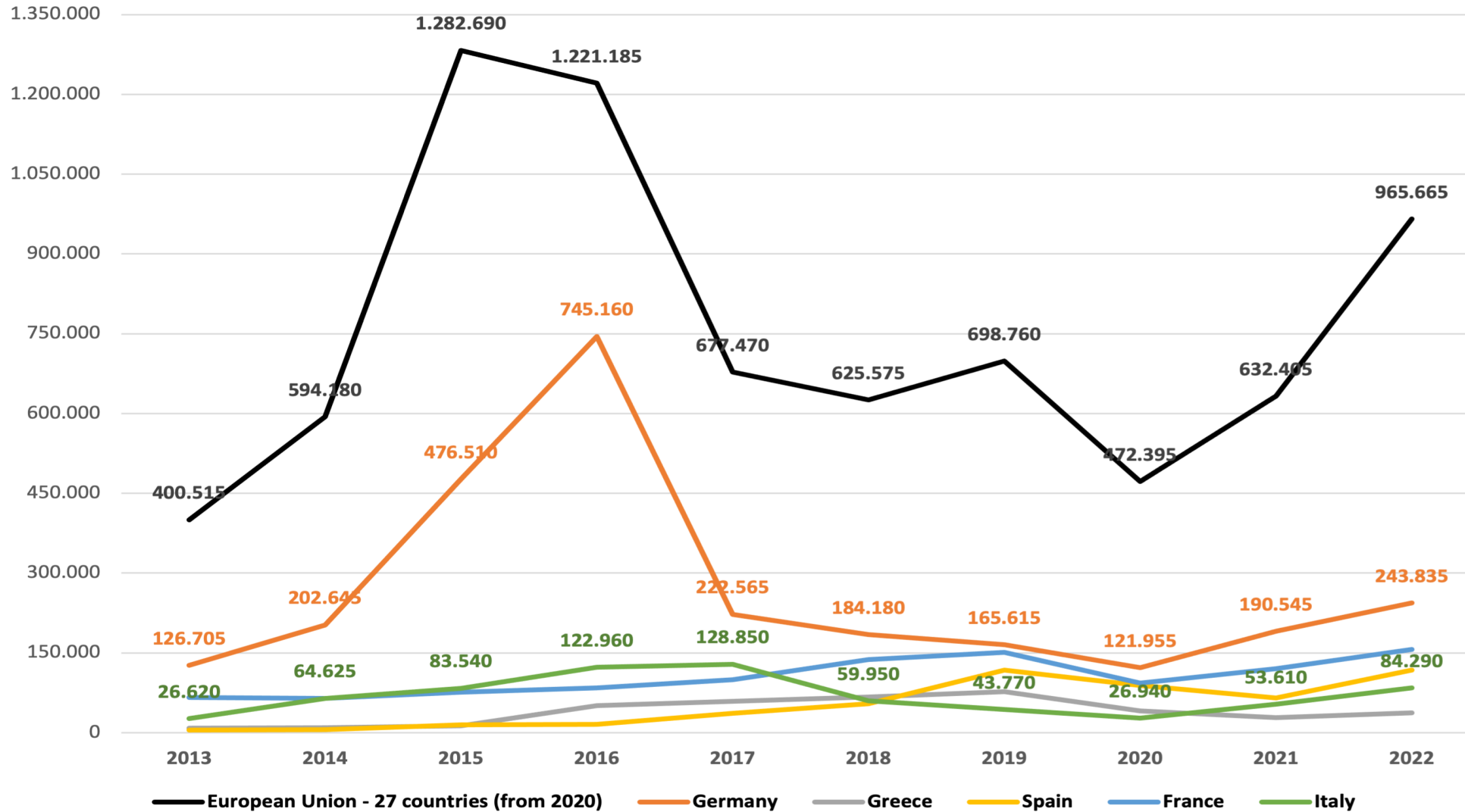
- ▶ I will try to show how European and national policies of member states have been defined according to a **securitarian model** based on the concept of "**emergency**" and on the idea of the **social unsustainability** of migration.
- ▶ This approach **ignores the structural dimension of migration** and influences also the agenda of social movements, pushing them into what we might call a "**permanent emergency trap**."
- ▶ Finally, I will mention some **key points of an alternative agenda on migration policies**.

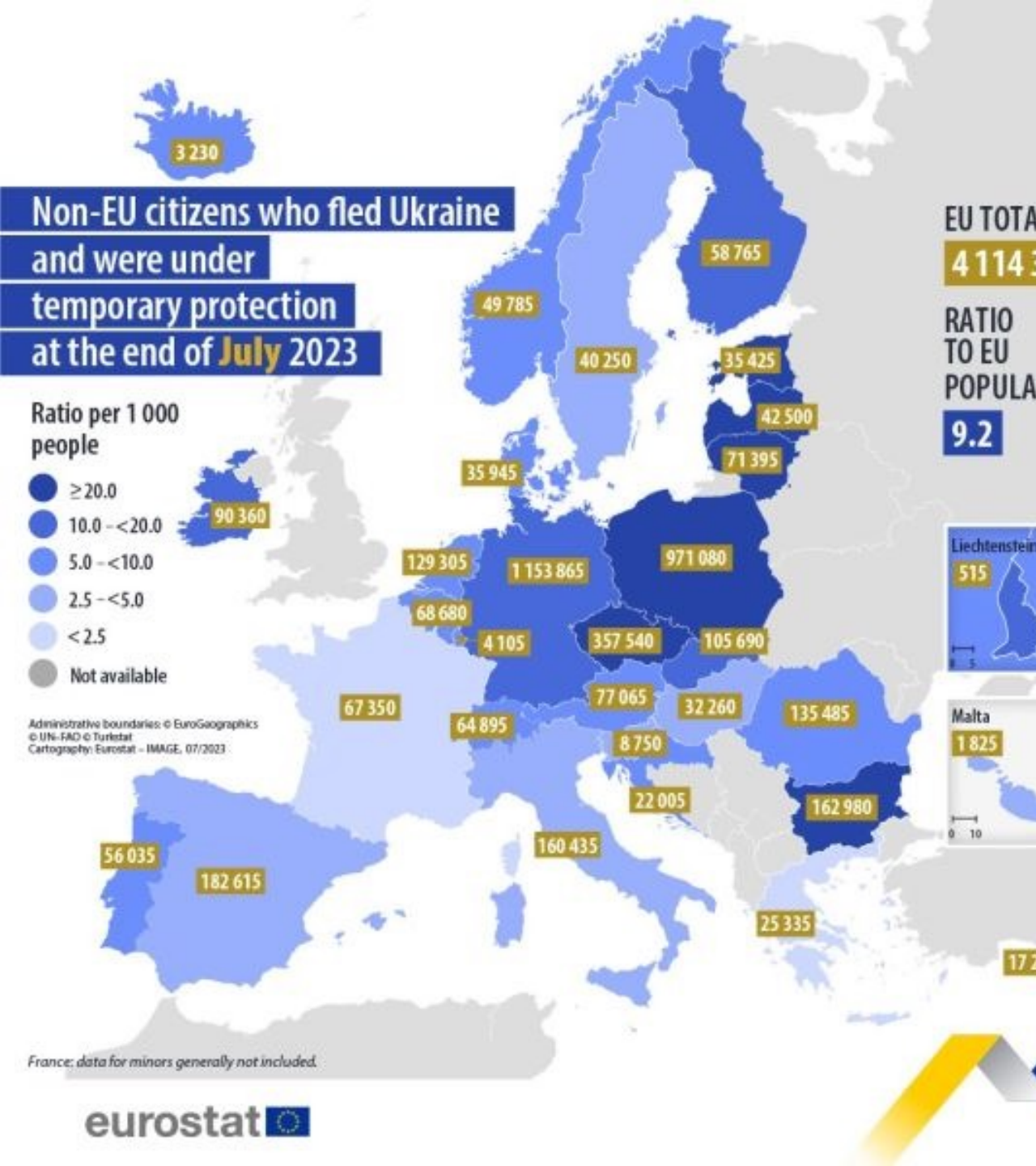


## Some data (2022). There is no invasion nor “emergency”

- ▶ **23.8** million of **non-EU citizens live in EU**, equal to **5.3%** of the **446.7** million people living in the EU
- ▶ **More than 900,000** asylum applicants in the year
- ▶ **Around 333,000 irregular border crossings**, of which 148.000 sea crossings and 183.400 land border crossings (Frontex Data)
- ▶ **420,100 non-EU citizens ordered to leave the EU** but “only” **18.5%** were really **returned** to a non-EU country.
- ▶ **More than 4.1 million of Ukrainian refugees** host in EU countries in a very short time
- ▶ **The Ukrainian humanitarian crisis tells us that numbers are not the real problem.**

## Asylum applicants in EU. 2013-2023

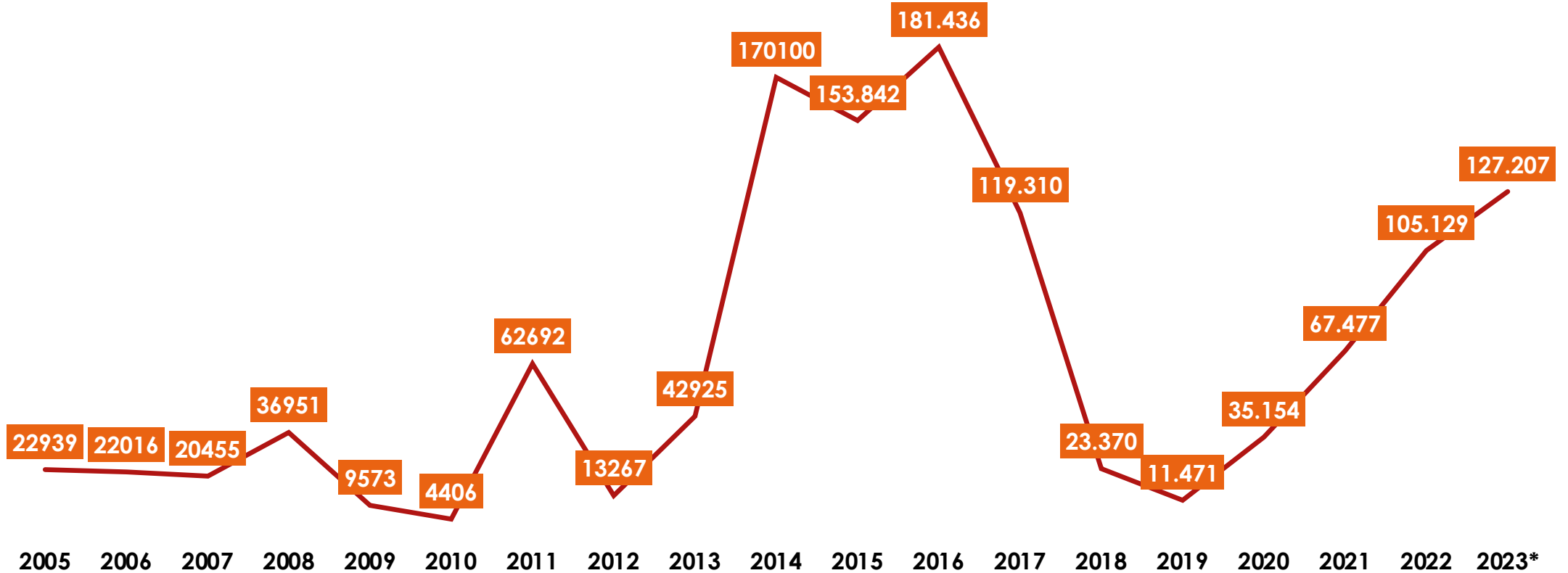




- ▶ More than **4.1 million people** who fled **Ukraine** after the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, had **temporary protection** status in EU countries.
- ▶ The main EU countries hosting beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine were **Germany** (1.153 865 people; 28% of the total), **Poland** (971 080; 24%) and **Czechia** (357 540; 9%). Italy hosted around **160.000** Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection.



### Migrants arrived to Italy by sea. Years 2005-2023



Data of Ministry of Interior on 15 September 2023



## The debate

The impact of migration and migration policies on the welfare systems of destination countries has always been one of the most debated issues.

The choices to **contain regular migration flows** and the progressive tightening of regulations on citizenship and access to social rights have often been justified by the governments with the need to **contain public spending**. According to this approach, overly-guaranteed regulations on reception, family reunification, acquisition of citizenship, social assistance and welfare would in fact lead to an excessive expansion of public spending.

**The European policies to contain economic migration**, promoted since the second half of the 1970s, particularly in the states of long-standing immigration, are an expression of this view that has gradually affected the countries of southern Europe as well.



At the same time, globalisation has favoured the crisis and weakening of traditional economies, the increase in poverty rates, the importance of migration push effects and the increase in the number of countries with high migration pressure. The **migration has thus become a structural element of the global economy**. Migrants are mainly called upon to meet the demand for manual, low-skilled and low-income labour left unsatisfied by native workers.

Outside companies, **domestic work, predominantly female, acts as a true 'parallel welfare'**, replacing the family services that social policies are unable to offer and allowing native women to enter or remain in the labour market.

**Lower wages, unskilled and undeclared work, low professional and social mobility and discrimination in access to social benefits** thus cross the life of third-country nationals living in Europe.





## Migration to Europe.

### Key events in last twelve years

2011: So-called "**Arab Springs**" and the beginning of the civil conflict in Syria

Numerous **shipwreck oin the Mediterranean sea (Lampedusa 2013)**

2014-2015: increase in migrant arrivals on the **Balkan route** and Syrian humanitarian crisis

2015: **European Agenda on Migrations**

2020: **New European Pact on Migration and Asylum**

2020-2021: pandemic crisis

August 2021: **Afghan humanitarian crisis**

Feb. 24, 2022: **Russian aggression to Ukraine**, millions Ukrainian citizens flee to Europe

2022-2023: New rise in arrivals by sea from **South Mediterranean Route**



## European policy priorities

1. The European Union, since the Schengen Agreement, has defined a **double standard** with reference to the issue of **freedom of movement**, clearly differentiating the right to mobility of European citizens, from that of third-country nationals.
2. While an attempt has been made in recent years to build a Common European Asylum System, **the management of migration policies remains the responsibility of the member states.**
3. There is a **strong disparity of interests** between Northern states, that have stronger welfare and reception systems and are preferred destination of secondary migrant movements, and the Southern border countries (primarily Italy, Greece and Spain), with weaker welfare and reception systems, more exposed to primary flows of migrants but not very attractive to migrants. In last 20 years, the Northern countries **pressured those in the South to stiffen migration policies and stop economic and “irregular” migration.**
4. With the process of European enlargement to the East, further critical elements have been added with reference to the "zero tolerance" to migration approach proposed by Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.



## The European Migration Agenda (2015)

Goal: To launch a common asylum policy and a new European legal migration policy. The agenda is divided into two parts: launching some emergency actions (Immediate Action) and

Long-term agenda consisting of 4 pillars:

1. **prevention of irregular migration** (action plan against migrant smuggling, readmission agreements, returns, enhancement of FRONTEX's role in return);
2. **external border management** (+ role of FRONTEX, EU coast guard coordination, "smart" borders, third country support);
3. **Creation of a common asylum policy** (improved standards on reception conditions and asylum procedures; fight against abuse of the asylum system; rapid processing of asylum claims from "**safe countries**," more biometric identifiers in the Eurodac system; Review and possible revision of the Dublin Regulation).
4. **promotion of a legal migration policy** (Modernization and reform of the Blue Card system, dialogue with social partners on economic migration, Linking migration policy to development policy, Redefining funding priorities for "integration").



## The European Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020)

The New European Pact presented in September 2020 does not represent a sign of discontinuity.

Four main objectives have been identified:

1. the **acceleration of procedures for examining asylum applications**;
2. the introduction of a "**flexible system**" of **solidarity** among member countries related to reception and **returns**;
3. the **development of cooperation** with third countries aimed at countering "irregular" migration and collaboration on readmission;
4. the creation of a system of **common governance of migration and for returns**.



## **The European Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020)**

### **There is no provision for mandatory relocation of migrants.**

Only in particular situations (of "migration crisis," migratory pressure, or a landing of migrants rescued at sea), the Commission may request the cooperation of member countries, which may choose to express their "solidarity" with the country affected by the arrivals by opting for relocation (the relocation and reception of some migrants on its territory) or "sponsorship" of return operations in the form of resources or means.

Cooperation with third countries remains bent on the need to strengthen the fight against "illegal" migration and increase return operations.

**The proposed strategy continues to focus its gaze on Europe's external borders by seeking to move them as far apart as possible (externalization).**



## Policy outcomes

- More than **23,300 migrants dead in the Mediterranean sea** since 2015 (UNHCR)
- • European cooperation and funds are focused on **external border control** and cooperation with third countries aimed at stopping "irregular migration." (Turkey agreement, Africa fund, Italian agreements with Niger, Libya and Tunisia)
- **Completely removed the issue of facilitating "legal" migration** of both refugees and economic migrants.
- **Totally stalled the process of reforming the Dublin III regulation**, which is fundamental for reducing the distance between the countries of southern and northern Europe.
- Still highly **differentiated refugees reception systems** in different member countries.
- **Conflicts** among member states persist
- **Totally inadequate investment on policies for social, labor and cultural inclusion** of asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants.

**The present EU policies feed the process of illegalization** of third country nationals living in Europe.



## 4 major removals

1. The population growth estimates tell us that the European population **is set to decrease**. This implies an **aging population** trend, a consequent increase in the old-age dependency ratio and a growing instability of welfare systems, imbalances that could be at least **mitigated** thanks to migration.
2. **The absence of legal entry routes** for “economic migrants” **fuels illegal trafficking** of people, causes thousands of deaths, feeds black labour market and also contributes to the increase of asylum applications.
3. This puts **pressure on national reception systems**, and push member states to increase human and financial resources in borders surveillance and control, detention of migrants without documents, and forced returns.
4. The increase of economic and social inequalities between countries and into the countries, the birth of new wars and civil conflicts, the consequences of the climate change **fuel international mobility**. Any effort to stop migrations can not work while causes **the violation of human rights of thousands of people**.



## An alternative agenda on migration: breaking out of the Emergency trap

- ▶ To open EU channels for **economic migration**
- ▶ To promote **European public search and rescue missions at sea**
- ▶ To **reform the Dublin Regulation**, with particular reference to the obligation to apply for asylum in the country of first entry
- ▶ **To open humanitarian corridors** for asylum seekers and introduce a **compulsory principle of solidarity in reception** refugees
- ▶ **To ensure the 'regularity' of migrants** creating **ordinary regularisation mechanisms** to foreigners permanently inserted into European society
- ▶ **To broaden the perimeter of social citizenship** enlarging the EU commitment and financial resources for welfare and **social inclusion** policies
- ▶ **To combat undeclared work**
- ▶ To promote **international cooperation aimed at improving the living conditions of local populations avoiding** any form of economic support to the governments of countries that do not guarantee human rights (like Turkey and Libya).





## ▶ **Conclusions**

- ▶ There is a very high level of **delegitimization** of the European institutions and we could see a further **growth of nationalist, populist and xenophobic forces** in next European Parliament.
- ▶ The **securitarian approach to migration adopted to date has failed**: it has not brought greater stability and social cohesion, either in Europe or in the individual member states. This approach should be refused and inverted by democratic and left parties thanks to the relaunch of the concept of “social security” and “universality of rights”.
- ▶ Our responsibility, as social movements, should be to **deconstruct the idea of a competition between the rights of European citizens and those of third-country nationals** arriving to and living in Europe and to build a **common social and political alliance for equality**.
- ▶ That should mean **to integrate** alternative migration and asylum agenda into **the social agendas on structural policies, starting from labour and welfare**.

Thank you for your attention!  
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