



**EUROPE
MUST
ACT.**

A STATE OF SHRINKING PROTECTION

**Asylum, Advocacy, and
Building Resilience in the EU**



**What has
asylum
become in
the EU?**

Index

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Redefining Asylum in the EU</u>	4
<u>Protection for Nationalities: Forgetting Individual Rights</u>	6
<u>In Depth: “Safe Third Country” Policies</u>	9
<u>Regular Migration Pathways</u>	11
<u>Advocacy in a Hostile Environment</u>	14
<u>Understanding Advocacy and Activist Fatigue</u>	16
<u>Conclusion</u>	20

INTRODUCTION

The refugee convention once stood as a cornerstone of human rights protection; however, through the new EU Pact on migration and asylum and the latest policies and practices being carried out by the European Union and its member states, we have seen access to this fundamental right being reshaped as the focus has shifted towards deterrence, externalisation and generalisation rather than safety.

As 2025 has come to an end and we seem to be looking ahead into another pivotal year of migration policy-making and shifting asylum landscape, **this report takes stock of these developments and asks what asylum in Europe has become.**

We examine how new EU initiatives, including revisions to the concepts of safe third country and safe country of origin, are **accelerating returns and narrowing access** to protection. We also explore the **collapse of resettlement commitments, the scarcity of regular pathways**, but also examples of when such regular pathways have been effective and successful, prompting us to focus on new ways to approach asylum within the EU.

Reflecting on this evolving European refugee and asylum environment has also highlighted another development: **the growing pressure on those who defend the rights of people on the move.** From the criminalisation of solidarity to funding cuts and hostile political narratives, people on the move, advocates, and frontline workers are navigating an increasingly difficult environment. Understanding this context is essential, not only for assessing the state of asylum, but for recognising what we can do to sustain long-term resistance, solidarity, and hope.

In bringing these threads together, this report reflects on how **protection is being reshaped in Europe and provides a direction for where meaningful alternatives and collective resilience can emerge.**

REDEFINING ASYLUM IN THE EU

Over the past year, we've seen a profound shift in Europe's approach to asylum, one centred on tightening rules, accelerating returns, and outsourcing responsibility far beyond EU borders. Member States like Austria, Denmark, Italy, and Greece have pushed hard to broaden the safe third country concept and to enable much faster returns, even to states that people have only briefly transited through. And **this pressure is now reflected in several major Commission initiatives.**

In March 2025, **the Commission proposed a revision of the EU's return rules to speed up removals.** In April, it published a new EU-wide list of 'safe countries of origin'. Then, in May, a revision of the 'safe third country' concept under the **Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR) was announced, due to take effect in 2026.**

These initiatives sit alongside the incoming Pact on Migration and Asylum, a package of ten interlinked laws that will reshape how the EU manages people seeking protection. Rather than a menu for Member States, the Pact is designed as a single system. It includes:

- A **revamped Eurodac Regulation**, transforming Eurodac into a far more extensive biometric database covering asylum seekers, people in return procedures, and beneficiaries of resettlement or temporary protection.
- A **new Screening Regulation**, establishing the first set of checks for anyone arriving irregularly at the EU's borders.
- A revised Asylum Procedures Regulation, together with the Return Border Procedures Regulation, introducing compulsory asylum and return procedures at the external border.
- The Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, which **redefines responsibility-sharing** and provides a "solidarity mechanism" between Member States.
- A Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation, setting out measures to be activated when Member States face "crisis" situations.
- A **new Qualification Regulation**, clarifying who qualifies for international protection and the rights attached to that status.
- An updated Reception Conditions Directive, which sets **minimum standards for housing, support, and material conditions** for applicants.
- And the **Union Resettlement Framework**, intended to create a stable and predictable route for refugees to reach Europe safely.

But the direction of travel into the EU is clear: **a system designed to contain, filter, and return**, particularly when considering the safe countries of origin list and the revision of the safe third country concept—both of which will be covered in more detail later in this report.

Furthermore, the **European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)** Committee is currently debating its position on the revised Return Regulation. It proposes **reducing maximum detention from 24 to 18 months**, strengthening safeguards for vulnerable people, banning minors and families from third-country return hubs, and giving Frontex a stronger monitoring mandate. The Council, however, wants to retain the 24-month limit and still allows returns of minors where 'adequate conditions exist'.

Meanwhile, several Member States are tightening policies nationally. Denmark, which holds the Council Presidency, has made externalised asylum processing a priority and continues to promote its 'zero refugee policy' of short, reviewable permits. Switzerland is preparing to restrict the movement of people seeking protection. Cyprus is prioritising return hubs and cooperation with third countries. Greece now withdraws refugee status from people who return to their country of origin. The Netherlands is ending the right to work for applicants from 'safe' countries, and Ireland plans to require employed applicants to contribute to their accommodation costs.

Together, these developments signal an EU that is **redefining asylum around deterrence, containment, and return. The question now is whether Europe still views asylum as a protection system or as an obstacle to be managed.**



PROTECTION FOR NATIONHOODS:

Forgetting individual rights

Some of the developments we are reviewing in this report involve a trend towards policies which **treat international protection as a circumstantial concession** to national collectives, thus moving away from the fundamental right to asylum described in the Geneva Convention. To enable return, regulations are developed to establish which third countries may be considered safe, often assuming safety regardless of an applicant's individual circumstances. At the same time, the Temporary Protection Directive, when applied to specific crises, provides protection based on international and geopolitical circumstances rather than individual asylum claims.

This trend, however, is not entirely new. The packaging of the right to protection as a right for specific nationals grew together with the definition of a European migration policy in response to international relations. The so-called 'external dimension' of EU immigration and asylum policy appeared with some clarity for the first time in October 1999. The conclusions of a special summit on Justice and Home Affairs stated that immigration and asylum issues should be 'integrated in the definition and implementation of other Union policies and activities', including external relations.

Point 20 of the conclusions of this summit states: ***"The European Council acknowledges the need for approximation of national legislations on the conditions for admission and residence of third country nationals, based on (...) the situation in the countries of origin."*** And ***"these decisions should take into account not only the reception capacity of each Member State, but also their historical and cultural links with the countries of origin."***

And Point 26 states: ***"The European Council calls for assistance to countries of origin and transit to be developed in order to promote voluntary return"***.

Christina Boswell (2003) described how, around the turn of the century, cooperation within the EU was built for the specific purpose of limiting movement into the Schengen space. It was assumed that EU (and especially Schengen) countries would have to coordinate efforts to limit or prevent movement into the EU as a whole. This would require intensive cooperation with countries of origin and transit countries and would include **readmission agreements and collaboration in the interruption of irregular migration, combined with development aid.**

The **relocation and hotspot systems** for the internal management of the so-called “refugee crisis” also follow this logic of classifying people across their countries of origin to determine their destination. Both systems ‘sort out’ people in clear need of international protection, defining the need by nationality and re-distributing applicants among member states. This procedure effectively discriminates between people who are generally eligible for international protection and people to be returned, paying no attention to their particular conditions or needs. This national selection dynamic is also reflected in the value given to ‘safe country’ concepts (safe country of origin, first country of asylum and safe third country) as criteria in examining asylum requests. As we describe in detail in the next section of this report, the identification of a safe state to which a migrant can be returned is considered a discriminant between founded and unfounded or inadmissible asylum requests.

In a persuasive analysis of narratives supporting the European Union Global Strategy, **Michela Ceccorulli and Sonia Lucarelli (2017)** describe how discourses of ‘Resilience’ bring relevance to nations of origin in the processing of asylum requests. As suggested in a document ***“on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration”, resilience aims to “enable migrants and refugees to stay close to home and avoid taking dangerous journeys”***. The notion not only promotes staying close to the land you are forced to leave, but also considers the decision to ‘stay close’ as a strength for migrants and refugees, implying the assumptions that close to home they would be better off than further, and that Europe is far from the home of asylum seekers.



Ceccorulli and Lucarelli refer to a former **document from 2003**, where the Commission explained that developing the asylum system of transit countries to turn them into first countries of asylum could allow protection to be delivered “close to needs” and this would reduce incentives to look for protection in the European Union. The 2016 **Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy** builds on these documents and clearly underlines the role of resilience for the EU’s security:

“Fragility beyond our borders threatens all our vital interests. By contrast, resilience – the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises – benefits us.”

Resilience, which in the psychological literature typically refers to the capacity of individuals to adapt and survive after damage, is hereby applied to migration to refer to a property of neighbouring and further countries – practically, “transit and origin countries”. A resilient state or society would basically be one that can become better after a ‘crisis’. The EU’s resilience approach takes sides with the states and institutions that are **pushing their people out into exile**. It is designed to reduce the amount of economic migrants and asylum seekers en route to the EU, on the pretext that the sending countries can or should get better. The resilient approach gets the EU in selective engagement with countries of origin, to alleviate the conditions leading to migration, improve those countries’ capacity to manage migration and encourage them to readmit the nationals who fled from them.



Stock Image designed from [Freepik](https://www.freepik.com)

IN DEPTH: “SAFE THIRD COUNTRY” POLICIES

Forcibly displacing the right to asylum

On December 8, the Council of the European Union (EU) published a new **regulation** revising the safe third country concept. The notion of “Safe Third Country” (STC) recently developed in EU regulations jeopardises the fundamental right to asylum as enshrined in the **1951 Refugee Convention: the right for a person under impending risk of violence, repression or mistreatment to access a specific country for temporary or stable protection**. The STC notion treats asylum applicants as populations that can be forcibly transferred to third countries based mainly on the properties of the country of origin and the country of destination of the transfer rather than on a substantive assessment of individual claims.

STC policies are developed through the **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**, adopted in May 2024. They are based on the notion that member States may reject asylum applications as inadmissible without examining whether the persons meet the conditions for being granted protection in the EU. The STC concept may be applied as part of the border procedure.

The **Asylum Procedure Regulation** 2024/1348 (APR) introduced several changes to the STC rules, aiming at allowing for a broader applicability of the concept. These changes include widening the **criteria that allow a third country to be considered ‘safe’**. In particular, the APR allows countries that are not parties to the Geneva Convention to be designated as STCs, provided that they can offer **‘effective protection’**; it makes an explicit reference to family links and former experience in the third country as possible indications of a connection; it allows to designate a third country as ‘safe’ with exceptions for specific parts of its territory or clearly identifiable categories of persons; it introduces a presumption of safety for third countries with which the EU has concluded a STC agreement (in December 2025, these countries **were confirmed as Kosovo, Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, India, Morocco, and Tunisia**).

The APR also promotes the construction of common lists of STCs designated at EU level, still admitting the possibility for Member States to designate their own STCs at national level. This contributes to normalising procedures to send asylum applicants away from the EU.

The **latest EU provisions** developing the STC notion will apply as of June 2026. The extensions introduced in this proposal include the requirement of a link between the asylum seeker and the STC that makes it reasonable to transfer the applicant to that STC. This requirement involves at least some focus on the particular circumstances the asylum applicant is facing... yet with **the institutional purpose of avoiding the application.**

Also, the proposal reminds that due process guarantees established by the APR must be respected by Member States applying the concept, notably an individual, case-by-case assessment of whether the country is safe for each applicant concerned, as well as the possibility for the applicant to challenge in court both the existence of a connection to the third country in question and the fact that the country would be safe given their specific circumstances. Although this requirement provides applicants with the opportunity to rebut the presumption of safety of the third country, each applicant would have to actively demand this right in front of a court of justice. **This restriction clearly harms the protection of the right to asylum: the applicant does not only have to demonstrate their need for asylum in Europe, but also and as a pre-requisite, the impossibility to defend that need in a specific third country.**

Other aspects linked to due process, including individual assessment, are requirements under EU and international law and jurisprudence as essential in protecting individuals from refoulement and preserving their fundamental rights. Given their binding nature under EU and international law, these safeguards should remain in place. The question is, **how are these guarantees to be respected in procedures designed precisely to prevent individuals from applying for asylum?**

The development of regulations and agreements to displace potential asylum applicants to STCs extends the effective impossibility of requesting asylum at the European borders, depending on your nation of origin. It is a further development of a Fortress Europe which, year by year, **forgets the fundamental right to asylum, replacing it with the forced displacement of applicants to third countries**, away from the land which once claimed to be a haven of democracy.

REGULAR MIGRATION PATHWAYS

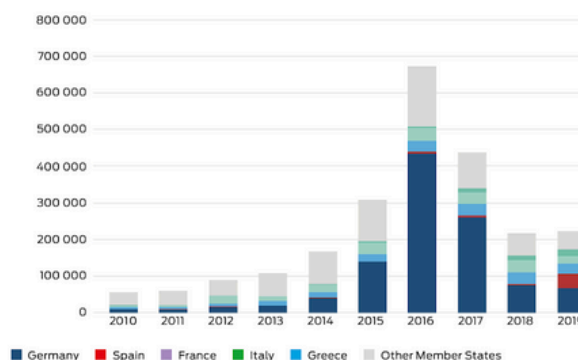
While the EU prioritises the expediency of returns, people continue to undertake extremely dangerous journeys to reach its borders. A key challenge for people forced to migrate remains the lack of safe and regular pathways. **In the absence of viable alternatives, many are driven to rely on smugglers and to risk their lives in search of safety and protection.**

In Europe, although some EU member states have introduced small-scale resettlement schemes and humanitarian visas through humanitarian corridors, programmes offering regular migration pathways are ad hoc, discretionary, and far too limited to meet the scale of need.

An example given in a report published by the European Liberal Forum, noted that **"in 2019, the ratio between resettled refugees and positive first-instance asylum decisions in the EU was roughly 1:8** (see Figures 2 and 3). This means that the irregular entry and asylum channel is, despite the enormous risks and dangers for those who undertake the journey, still a more realistic way of getting to stay in Europe than waiting for one of the still relatively few resettlement spots on offer." (p 44).

The situation around resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes has, rather than improved, gotten worse. **A recent press release from the International Rescue Committee dated Nov 2025** highlights that "The EU states have committed to welcome just 15,230 people via resettlement and humanitarian admissions across both 2026 and 2027 – this marks an immense 75% drop on their pledge of 61,000 people for the years 2024 and 2025." This is according to The **Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan 2026-2027**, published on Nov 11, 2025.

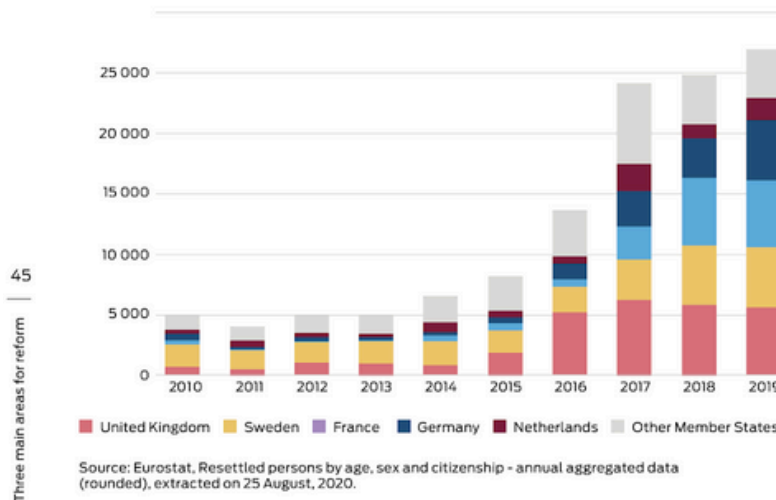
Figure 3: Positive decisions* on asylum applications in the EU, 2010-2019



Source: Eurostat, First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data (rounded), extracted on 1 October 2020.

* Positive decisions include refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian grounds.

Figure 2: Refugees resettled to EU Member States, 2010-2019



Graph source: **Pieces of the Puzzle: Managing Migration in the EU - The European Liberal Forum** (p 45)

While proportionally far more people receive first-instance asylum decisions than enter through resettlement programmes, many more who migrate still do not meet the threshold for protection. As Bernd Pasuel writes in the **European Liberal Forum report**, mentioned above, “Refugees have a well-founded fear of persecution but may also be motivated to move as a result of poverty. While migrants may not reach the threshold required to qualify for protection as a refugee, they may still be seeking to escape violence or an oppressive regime in their country of origin” (p 42-43). People who migrate for reasons such as corruption or economic instability may not qualify for protection under the CEAS – yet for most, there are virtually no regular or safe migration routes available.

Several legal, NGO, and economic organisations have highlighted that expanding regular migration pathways would ease pressure on overstretched protection systems and offer a more positive, sustainable response to refugee crises! Examples from different contexts show that when such pathways are created, they can work effectively for both those who are migrating and the host communities.

Examples of alternatives:

- On 4 March 2022, the EU activated its Temporary Protection Directive (2001) to respond to the unprecedented numbers of displaced people from Ukraine. This directive **allowed the beneficiaries to access social and economic support, employment, and prompted EU countries to adapt national laws to accommodate Ukrainian people**. Poland removed all work permit requirements for Ukrainians, ensuring full access to the labour market. Employers only needed to notify local labour offices when hiring. In other EU countries, legal facilitation varied, but employers were confident in legal frameworks and motivated to hire. The **European business community's strong employment response showed how clear legal access can drive rapid refugee integration**.
- In response to high numbers of people from the Western Balkans, in particular Albania and Serbia, seeking asylum in Germany in 2015, the German government introduced the **Western Balkans regulation** in January 2016, allowing citizens from six Western Balkan countries to apply for employment visas regardless of qualifications. The introduction of this policy also **contributed to significantly reduced asylum applications, as it provided regular migration pathways for people**.
- **Colombia** also offers a strong example of **enabling refugee employment**. In February 2021, it introduced a 10-year Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for over 1.7 million Venezuelans, granting both existing and newly arrived people legal access to work and protection.

Expanding regular pathways is essential to making migration safer and more effective. It not only protects people on the move but also helps reduce the hostility fuelled by misinformation. As noted by the **World Economic Forum**, greater access to regular pathways can build public confidence in safe and **dignified migration**, ease pressure on asylum systems, better match skills with labour needs, weaken smuggling networks, and support more sustainable development in both origin and destination countries. As 2025 comes to an end and we look towards the introduction of harsher restrictions for people coming to Europe in 2026, it is vital to advocate for the introduction of more regular migration pathways and safer options for people to move.

ADVOCACY IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

This year, the Europe Must Act research team has published papers that describe the **growing hostility** towards people on the move, the expanding use of **AI and border technologies** to surveil and close our European borders, the trend towards **externalising and outsourcing asylum** amongst European nations and, as we've seen in this report, the increasing focus on Safe Third Country policies.

Despite our efforts to include positive stories and focus on hope-based communication, combined, they paint a bleak picture of the state of asylum and protection for people on the move in Europe.

Now, as we reflect on this landscape, it becomes equally important to understand what this environment means for the advocates, activists, displaced people, and frontline workers who sustain the struggle for rights and protection.

How Has the Nature of Advocacy Changed in Europe?

Advocating for human rights and, within this, for the rights of people on the move is by nature a struggle that changes and evolves. Currently, there is a **combination of political, media, and funding pressures that have put many organisations and individuals under particular strain:**

1. Criminalisation of solidarity

The **criminalisation of migration** and the heightened focus on preventing people smuggling have also increasingly led to the prosecution of people on the move and those who are providing humanitarian assistance to them. Across Europe, humanitarian actors, grassroots groups, volunteers, and even journalists now face legal threats for providing assistance (particularly for search and rescue missions) or documenting abuses.

2

This misuse of counter-smuggling legislation **creates a climate of fear, intensifies operational risks, and forces** advocacy organisations to **devote more resources to legal defence and compliance** rather than community engagement or policy change.

2. Funding cuts and organisational strain

Funding reductions have hit every layer of the protection ecosystem. Cuts to asylum services, humanitarian programmes, including major organisations such as **UNHCR**, and long-term integration support leave frontline workers overstretched and displaced communities more vulnerable. As a result, civil society organisations in Europe are under financial strain and have **called for the European Commission** to prioritise preventing a crisis of asylum, reception and inclusion in Europe, as the lack of funding translates into a reduction in services and life-saving assistance.

3. An unrelenting and hostile media environment

Advocates now work against a constant tide of “**migration crisis**” and anti-immigration narratives. Research across Europe shows that **media and political discourse has played a major role in shaping public hostility³, polarising attitudes and legitimising⁴ restrictive policies.** The repetition of inflammatory language, scapegoating, and fear-based storytelling has not only impacted and polarised public opinion, but it also forces advocates into reactive, crisis-management communication.

Ultimately, creating an exhausting position where the need to continuously counter misinformation leaves little room for proactive, solutions-oriented messaging.

Recognising these difficulties is **crucial** to correctly understanding the environment within which many organisations and individuals are operating. This is crucial as, by recognising how these dynamics have made advocacy more exhausting and those involved more susceptible to burnout, we can attempt to provide effective solutions.

2: Graffin, N. Howard, M. Vincett, J. (2025). Criminalisation anhaveshowd Control: Mediterranean Maritime Search and Rescue Workers’ Perceptions of Uses of Law. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*. Volume 44: 2. Pp 228-251. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdae026>

3: Conzo, P., Fuochi, G., Anfossi, L. et al. (2021). Negative media portrayals of immigrants increase ingroup favoritism and hostile physiological and emotional reactions. *Sci Rep* 11, 16407. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-95800-2>

4: Schneider-Strawczynsk, S. Valette, J. (2024). Media Coverage of Immigration and the Polarization of Attitudes. CEPII Working Paper. No 2024-01. ISSN 2970-491X. https://www.cepii.fr/PDF_PUB/wp/2024/wp2024-01.pdfworkInternationalf

5: Julios-Costa, M. Montiel-McCann, C. (2025). A hostile environment: Language, race, politics and the media. Runnymede Trust. <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/a-hostile-environment-language-race-politics-and-the-media>

UNDERSTANDING ADVOCACY AND ACTIVIST FATIGUE

Advocacy fatigue, burnout, compassion fatigue, and activist exhaustion are all similar terms to describe what emerges when someone with prolonged exposure to systemic injustice meets chronic organisational and emotional overload.

Rather than a sudden collapse, burnout often unfolds gradually through constant exposure to traumatic stories, relentless administrative and political hurdles, shrinking resources, and diminishing policy wins.

Activists may experience emotional detachment, cynicism, or a sense of “burning down rather than out”⁶.

Although it may often be felt on an individual level, that doesn’t mean it doesn’t have a wider impact. Persistent exhaustion reduces strategic clarity, creativity, and the long-term capacity to build coalitions, connections and solidarity – making it vital to recognise it within yourself and others for the longevity of any movement.

How to Avoid Advocacy Fatigue

Building resilience within organisations

This includes establishing supportive team cultures, setting work/home boundaries, ensuring regular debriefing sessions (particularly for those working in the field or on the frontlines), and using tools such as burnout rating scales or self-assessment frameworks, such as this one from Amnesty international.



Resisting hostility through community and solidarity.

Collective action, such as sharing resources, supporting grassroots organising, building a community of like-minded people and sharing hope-based communication, is incredibly important. Solidarity is both a political stance and a protective factor against individualised burnout. Listen, Read, Watch – Quick Resources:

- The Strength and Solidarity Podcast

Strength and Solidarity is an organisation that serves as a meeting place for people and ideas within the human rights sector. They focus on optimism and creativity, and this selected podcast focuses on “Building Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees”.

- Picum’s blog: Resisting an increasingly hostile environment

In Picum’s recent blog post, based on their 2025 General Assembly, they explore ideas and strategies of how to resist and respond to the increasingly migration-hostile European environment.

- Europe Must Act’s Video: Tips for volunteers to keep their mental health in check

Watch our video from World Mental Health Day that provides tips from volunteers at No Name Kitchen and Collective Aid for how they managed their mental health while working on the ground.



6: Reid, A., & Skuse, A. (2024). The Flickering Flame of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support: Burned Down, but Not Out. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 25(3), 233-250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2024.2349616>

Rest is a strategic practice

Making space for rest is essential as a way to sustain long-term engagement. Rest, reflection, and re-centring purpose enhance both well-being and effectiveness.

It's worth keeping in mind that rest is not as easy as it might seem. We often associate working with value, particularly when carrying out important and people-centred work, and may find it difficult to stop and rest or even find ourselves resisting resting.

Ultimately, it's important to recognise that rest has to be conscious, to set appropriate boundaries and to find a version of self-care that works for you, whether it's spending time with family and friends or turning your phone off for a quiet weekend.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare"

Audrey Lorde

Changing Attitudes, Alternative Strategies

Maintaining solidarity over time requires investment in long-term integration, community-level support, and sustained public engagement. It's costly on multiple fronts, however, by continuing to be resilient, rest and resist through ever-evolving strategies, we can prompt change.

Promising avenues include:

- **Hope-based communications** that tell stories of resilience, contribution, and successes to counter fear-based media cycles. Advocates for this strategy highlight that "If you don't make the case for the world you want to see, who will?"
- **Locally rooted solidarity initiatives** that build trust and visibility beyond national political debates. The ²HOPE not hate's Fear and Hope 2024 report argues that social cohesion is one of the key ways to combat extremism and that local resilience is a way to tap into the connections between people and encourage people to come together rather than push each other away.

- **Empowering displaced-person-led organisations**, which have unique insights into community needs. Despite this, people on the move are massively underrepresented politically and refugee-led community initiatives are often underfunded. To move forward, we need to give power to displaced communities, as R-SEAT emphasise: ***“The proper integration of refugees into host countries is important not only to ensure their own empowerment but to garner public support for refugee resettlement as well.”***

Advocacy for people on the move has become more necessary than ever—and also more difficult. Yet by investing in resilience, adopting alternative strategies, and building long-term solidarity, it is possible not only to sustain advocacy but to strengthen it.



CONCLUSION

As Europe approaches another defining moment in its migration and asylum narrative, the developments reviewed in this report **show a system steadily moving away from protection and towards a model built on deterrence, displacement, and division.** The expanding use of safe countries of origin, the erosion of regular pathways, and the externalisation of responsibility **illustrate how far the EU has drifted from the spirit of the Refugee Convention.**

At the same time, the challenges faced by people on the move underscore the human cost of these policy choices, while similarly, advocates and frontline workers are also dealing with the pressures of the increasingly harsh environment. Yet within this landscape, we also see examples of resilience, collective action, resistance, and credible alternatives, which are evidence that another approach is not only possible but already emerging in practice.

Continuing to advocate for a fair, human-centred approach is essential to protecting the right to asylum and advancing a **system grounded in dignity, solidarity, and shared responsibility.**



Stock Image designed from [Freepik](https://www.freepik.com)



**EUROPE
MUST
ACT.**

***We're volunteers and asylum and migration is a complex topic. This means we try to include a variety of opinions and approaches to a topic. We do our best to research and use our expertise accurately however, we also believe it's vital to encourage healthy discussion and stop misinformation. Therefore we encourage any feedback or constructive criticism of our work.**

SUPPORT OUR WORK
WWW.EUPEMUSTACT.ORG/MORE-ACTION

**FOR MORE, VISIT:
WWW.EUPEMUSTACT.ORG**

Europe Must Act (EMA) is a growing grassroots movement, bringing together volunteers and NGOs to campaign for the humane and dignified reception of refugees in Europe.



**Europe Must
Act
2025**