



**CEA(R)**  
Comisión Española  
de Ayuda al Refugiado



Manifesto for the 2019 European elections by five organisations  
France, Germany, Greece, Italy & Spain

# Building Europe, together with migrants and refugees

**On May 26 2019, the citizens of the European Union will elect their representatives to the European Parliament.**

The stakes of this election are high. Decisions taken at the European level play a central role and have the ability to safeguard the basic principles of solidarity, justice and freedom, which are at the origin of the EU. Today, xenophobic movements threaten these founding principles disregarding basic rights and human values and rejecting refugees and migrants. It is up to us and to a strong European Parliament to speak out and defend the EU's core principles.

Everywhere in Europe, civil society is organizing a welcome for people in need of protection and defending universal human rights. Every day, groups of diverse and creative citizens are inventing new models of active solidarity. Locally elected officials are striving to provide hospitality and a proper welcome for refugees and migrants. Countless ongoing initiatives demonstrate the will and the ability of our societies to find dignified responses to the questions of welcome and support for refugees and migrants.

While these initiatives continue to thrive, European states are increasingly abandoning their responsibility to welcome people in need. In so doing, they are putting aside their European and international obligations. Populist movements are feeding on fear and xenophobia. Governments have responded to the supposed "refugee crisis" with the shameless adoption of repressive measures, instead of working to reinforce a European framework of protection and solidarity.

**Our organizations, which work to support refugees and migrants, witness the impact of these repressive policies every day. With this manifesto, we wish to strongly denounce the way European states have deliberately been disregarding their European and international obligations with respect to human rights.**

- The priority of a policy of deterrence rather than that of saving lives leaves the EU and its member states responsible for the increase in deaths at sea. Libyan militia and dictatorships on Europe's doorstep are armed in order to close down escape routes. Many political and financial instruments have been created which subcontract the control of migrants. Border control is at the core of migration policy in order to avoid

the need to provide for the reception and protection of refugees and migrants. The hostile attitude towards the Civil Search and Rescue Organization, the closure of harbors for rescued boat people, ignoring the numbers of deaths are a heavy burden on the conscience of mankind.

- With the Dublin Regulation, which outlines the criteria and procedures for establishing member state responsibility for examining asylum claims, the EU countries have established a system in which people in need of protection are for the most part condemned to homelessness, wandering from country to country while the responsibility for the processing of their application is attributed to the country which was their entry-point – typically Spain, Italy, Greece, Hungary or Bulgaria. Currently we are witnessing the collapse of this unfair system, leading to dubious agreements, a situation of limbo and uncertainty. The wishes of the individuals involved, and their personal attachments, are rarely taken into account.
- With the increasing introduction of concepts such as “safe country of origin”, “first country of asylum” and “safe third country” member states dispense with their obligation to protect and invent a justification for deportation. Greece and Hungary are applying the notion of “safe third country”, asylum seekers are sent back to countries like Serbia and Turkey, who are expected to examine their applications instead of European states. With the current lack of essential guarantees, refugees are condemned to an existence without prospect or protection. Escape becomes a permanent normal state.
- With the expansion of the hotspot approach as a role model for European countries, areas of violent psychological deterrence are being created where human rights are being systematically breached and local communities are resorting to xenophobia. The so-called hotspot “Moria” on Lesbos island became a symbol of the shameful EU laboratory. In camps even beyond the European borders, refugees and migrants are detained and isolated as soon as entering a country seeking protection. Camps are places of control, stigmatization, humiliation and violence and represent once again a strategy used in an attempt to deny asylum and to deter people from seeking protection.

Europe today is in the throes a major political crisis. One of the symptoms is the failure of will, on the part of the member states, to respond to the needs of refugees and migrants other than by rejection, dissuasion and repression. The migration policies of the European institutions and member-states have been crafted in the image of a Europe which neither supports nor protects the dignity and human rights of people in need of protection. Deaths in the Mediterranean and on land routes, disgraceful situations in camps, institutional mistreatment... all are consequences of these policies. By focusing on measures of security which aim to turn refugees and migrants away rather than to improve procedures for legal entry, these policies and those responsible for them reinforce the idea that refugees and migrants represent a threat for Europe. Far from allaying fears, they legitimize xenophobic ideologies and aggravate the divisions on our continent.

**Therefore we, civil society organizations working with refugees and migrants in Germany, France, Greece, Italy, and Spain, call for people to act during this electoral period. The political stakes are high. We demand new asylum and migration policies! We call for the defense of a Europe which is based on the protection of human rights and human dignity on solidarity and on inclusion! We pledge to promote a Europe committed to its principles!**

**This is the Europe we want, and the Europe that we will defend together.**