

A 5 POINT PLAN FOR EUROPE

We want EU member states to tackle the refugee crisis head on, by adopting this 5 point plan

Europe must:

1. Maintain search and rescue operations with a mandate and capability equal to the task of saving lives in the Mediterranean
2. Provide safe and legal routes into Europe to tackle trafficking and people smuggling
3. Urgently scale up reception and support facilities
4. Provide relocation and resettlement programmes, with special priority for children, which are equal to the task of the worst refugee crisis since World War Two
5. Have regional plans – including sufficient aid – for the countries refugees are fleeing from which tackle the root causes of the refugee crisis

1. Maintain search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean

Hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants have made the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean. Often travelling in poor quality and overcrowded boats, it is no surprise that 2,600 people have tragically died. Thanks to the EU's decision to restart the rescue, thousands more lives have been saved.

Europe must maintain these search and rescue operations to continue saving lives. But it must also ensure these operations have the adequate capacity and mandate needed to deal with the rising scale of the problem. Saving lives, not border control, should be the priority for operations in the Mediterranean.

2. Provide safe and legal routes into Europe and returns policies that respect the rights of children

Ruthless people smugglers and traffickers will flourish as long as there are no safe and legal alternatives for people fleeing war and conflict. The risks are particularly acute for children, many of whom have already suffered appalling torture, abuse and exploitation on their way to Europe, only to be vulnerable once they arrive.

The EU should provide safe and legal routes into Europe such as humanitarian visas, increased flexibility in family reunification processes, private sponsorship programmes and student scholarship schemes. These should all ensure minimum standards of protection, especially for children, and must recognise child-specific forms of persecution – such as under-age recruitment, child trafficking and female genital mutilation – as the basis of asylum claims.

Save the Children believes every boy and girl seeking asylum has the right to a 'best interest assessment' and an individual screening for their specific protection needs. The child's best interests should be the primary consideration in any decision on referral, relocation, resettlement or return. The immediate deportation, forced return, or detention of a child are all violations of children's rights and as such, should never feature in Europe's response to the refugee crisis.

3. Urgently scale up reception and support facilities

European countries like Germany, Greece and Italy are under immense pressure to register thousands upon thousands of refugees and migrants arriving on their doorsteps every day and reception facilities and systems are either under enormous strain or not able to respond to the number of arrivals. Amidst these chaotic scenes, the EU must urgently scale up reception and support services which respect people's dignity and human rights.

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4. Do more to relocate and resettle refugees

European countries can and must do much more to offer refuge to people in need of protection - we have a legal, political and moral obligation to do so. The present relocation and resettlement quota system, although yet to be actioned, has already proven to be inadequate. It is only a temporary and exceptional mechanism and as such fails to adopt a systemic and strategic approach for addressing the issue in the long-term.

The EU Commission and EU Member States must urgently implement an effective relocation and resettlement system to deal with the current crisis. In addition, they should establish a permanent, balanced and mandatory intra-EU relocation scheme. Resettlement should be shared across the EU and be proportional to the number of people seeking protection worldwide. Priority should be given to children, both unaccompanied and those with their families, and decisions to relocate and resettle should be based on that child's best interests.

Save the Children is calling for a robust resettlement and humanitarian admission policy that would allow for a minimum of 5% of the Syrian refugee population to resettle in Europe in 2016.

5. Tackle the root causes of unsafe migration

The causes of migration are complex and Europe and members states should focus efforts on:

- **Ending the conflict in Syria:** People will make desperate, dangerous journeys for as long as what is behind them is more terrifying than what is in front. We therefore need to find an end to the violence in Syria. Without tackling the root causes, all other measures are only a stop gap. The international community's failure to address the conflict in Syria has been a contributing factor to the current refugee crisis. As such, more focus and international pressure must now be brought to bear on parties to the conflict, and those who support them, to end the fighting.
- **Supporting 'countries and regions of origin' including Syria's neighbours:** The majority of the world's 60 million refugees do not reach Europe but look for protection in neighbouring countries, within their 'regions of origin'. Most Syrian refugees, for example, have sought refuge in neighbouring countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. However, these regional responses remain woefully underfunded. The 2015 Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan is only 40% funded and recently the WFP suspended food aid to 200,000 refugees in Jordan due to lack of funds. EU members must assist the countries that host refugees from their neighbouring countries which would ensure humanitarian needs are met, preventing refugees from having to travel further afield to seek protection.
- **Regional responses:** We urgently need to step up regional responses with and within Sub Saharan Africa and the Middle East to tackle the push factors which compel people to flee such as conflict, persecution and extreme poverty. Sustained aid can provide adequate protection, food, shelter, education, and opportunities for children and their families in their home countries. These responses must focus on protecting the most vulnerable, including children. This funding can also be used to ensure that when children do flee, many of them alone, authorities of different countries are able to cooperate effectively to ensure these children are protected and cared for when crossing borders and during transit.

