

Red-Green Alliance/Enhedslisten, Denmark  
Socialist Left Party/Sosialistisk Venstreparti, Norway  
Left Coalition/Vasemmistoliitto, Finland  
The Left-Greens/Vinstrihreyfingin, Iceland  
The Left Party/Vänsterpartiet, Sweden

*The Nordic left wing parties want the Nordic countries to work together to answer the challenges presented by migration, instead of trying to make their countries as unwelcoming as possible to refugees.*

## **Together we can build a sustainable answer**

This autumn several Nordic countries have purposefully made it harder for people to exercise their right to seek asylum. This has resulted in a tragic race to the bottom, where countries have tried to avoid taking responsibility by adopting increasingly harsh policies. It is an alarming development that threatens both the right to seek asylum and human rights in general. This is not the way to build a constructive answer to the migration issues facing Europe.

The answer to the challenges presented by the global refugee situation has to be cooperation. It is the only sustainable and realistic way forward. Cooperation can take place on many different levels depending on the political circumstances – between the Nordic countries, between the European countries or in the United Nations. As an example, we believe that the EU should propose a joint agreement on the distribution of refugees in Europe.

In this current situation, with EU policy-making facing great challenges, cooperation between the Nordic countries becomes crucial. We call on the governments of our countries to meet immediately to discuss how we can respond to this situation together.

We believe that Nordic cooperation should rest on five basic pillars:

### **1. Everybody has the right to seek asylum**

The right of individuals to seek asylum in the country to which they have fled must be preserved. At the same time we must ensure that responsibility is shared by all Member States and push for a more equal distribution of asylum seekers throughout Europe. The right of asylum must be protected.

That protection given to refugees must be strong, humanitarian and legally secure. One outcome of increased Nordic cooperation could be minimum criteria regarding how refugees are treated. Another could be joint rules and cooperation to facilitate family reunion. The race to worsen conditions for asylum seekers must be stopped and that requires cooperation between the Nordic countries. The individual countries must also be allowed to adopt laws and measures that surpass the minimum criteria. This way, the race to the bottom can be stopped while making it possible for each country to apply more generous rules.

We also want to simplify the family reunification process by increasing cooperation between the embassies of the Nordic countries located abroad. Today many are forced to travel to a neighbouring country in order to file an application for reunification with the “correct” embassy.

## **2. Fair and common distribution mechanisms**

Instead of putting pressure on the refugees, the Nordic countries need to put pressure on the European Union to act. The Dublin Regulation is dysfunctional and needs to be replaced by a system that guarantees the right to asylum as well as a fair distribution of the responsibility for refugees. The principle that a person can only apply for asylum in the first European country reached must be reconsidered as it creates too much pressure on certain countries. The process of family reunification must be both prioritized and simplified.

The solution cannot be to sit back and watch passively as large refugee camps are built in Greece, Italy or Macedonia. The solution also cannot be to let Turkey act as the border patrol of the European Union, in exchange for Europe turning a blind eye toward the country’s widespread political persecutions. It is entirely unrealistic to think that solutions like these would be either humane or sustainable.

Europe needs a new pact, based on clear and fair principles on how it should best face the challenges posed by increased migration together. That is the only way to reach a sustainable solution. However, this requires that responsibility for refugees is shared among as many European countries as possible.

Unfortunately, the European Union appears to be unable to agree on a realistic solution. That is why we are pushing for a coalition of countries to lead the way to a sustainable situation.

Another possible solution is to turn to the United Nations. The European Union and the Nordic countries have to increase their cooperation with the UNHCR. We are willing to let the UNHCR play a bigger part in distributing refugees equally across Europe, which is something the organization has done in the past.

### **3. Freedom of movement between the Nordic countries**

The freedom of movement between the Nordic countries is too important to be gambled with. The ability for people to live in one country and work in a neighbouring one has made our countries more dynamic. The Nordic passport union, established in the 1950's, has deepened and strengthened the Nordic community.

We want the Nordic countries to uphold that freedom no matter what happens in the rest of Europe. Our countries should come together and reject the notion of border control, never accepting it as anything but a temporary solution.

Stricter border control, with transport companies forced to carry out identity checks, undoubtedly makes it more difficult for refugees to reach our borders, making the situation for refugees even more perilous. This will only end up favouring smugglers and traffickers. Closing our borders also creates a domino effect throughout Europe with more countries following our example. If that happens, demands for deeper Nordic cooperation with preserved passport union and right to asylum, will increase.

We need strong cooperation between the Nordic countries in order to find solutions to the current situation while simultaneously protecting the right to asylum. We support regulated immigration but do not want border checkpoints, ID-checks and visa requirements to restrict the right to asylum. This right can only be guaranteed if refugees can travel to a safe country and gain access to its asylum process.

### **4. Equal rights for all employees**

All employees should have the same rights and work under the same conditions on the Nordic labour market. A person's employment status should never play any part in deciding the outcome of his/her asylum application. No one should have to negotiate an employment contract under those circumstances.

The labour rights of refugees in the workplace must not be weakened. We oppose any attempts to weaken labour laws for refugees to create a second-class workforce. Instead we want to harness the skills of refugees while at the same time investing in education and language proficiency.

The Nordic labour market is interlinked, which means there is a common interest to keep it functioning properly. We want to create consensus among the Nordic countries regarding the protection of labour rights. This means we need to combat social dumping and exploitation on the labour market.

## **5. Addressing the causes of increased migration**

The current situation has made it necessary for us to address the reasons why people are forced to flee their countries. The Nordic countries should act to instil hope in people who are at risk of becoming refugees in the near future.

We must to work toward a political solution to the war in Syria, mainly by using the tools provided by the United Nations. The Nordic countries need to encourage active negotiations and an active peace process.

We want the Nordic countries to make a joint, long-term and more extensive financial commitment to foreign aid directed toward Syria and its neighbours. This commitment must consist of short-term humanitarian aid as well as long-term investments in things like children's education.

The Nordic Left believes that there will be a need for a modern version of the Marshall Plan. When peace finally does come to countries devastated by war, the wealthiest countries in the World must be prepared to support the formation of democratic institutions and infrastructure.

As long as the current crisis continues to be acute, emergency relief efforts will be necessary throughout Europe. We want the Nordic countries to increase their relief efforts in the Mediterranean, but also work toward a coordinated European relief effort. Those efforts have to be focused primarily on saving human lives.