

**Speech by Rudy De Leeuw
President of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Refugee Crisis In Europe: a trade union message for solidarity !**
Public event organised by ETUC and Croatian affiliates
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Dear friends,
Hello, bok, hola, bonjour à toutes et à tous,



Today, on International Migrants Day, everyone can remember this photo of Aylan, a 3-year old Syrian child, who died on a Turkish beach when the boat he was in sank on 2 September 2015.

Between 2000 and 2014, 40,00 migrants have died at the borders, 22,000 of whom while trying to reach Europe (editor's note: source: Alternatives éco). More than 4,000 died in 2015 alone (UNHCR figure).

Europe is facing a major crisis.

Countless refugees fleeing their country, looking for shelter and safety for their families, arrive at the gates of Europe.

These refugees – men, women and children – are leaving their country of origin because of the war.

But wars are not the sole underlying reason for migration. There are more and more inequalities in the world. They come on top of numerous violations of human rights, political tensions and gender inequalities – obstacles all to development.

The exploitation of human and natural resources also generates economic and political conflicts in many countries from which asylum seekers stem.

They often have to struggle to gain access to increasingly scarcer natural resources. Some are fleeing their country that has been hit by repeated droughts or quasi-permanent flooding.

Since 2008, the impact of climate change or natural disaster has forced some 26.4 million people to flee per year (editor's note: source: CNCD-11.11.11).

Thus, a better migration policy that includes the fight against climate change; a coherent policy for sustainable development; and better international cooperation must all contribute to provide a humane response, centred on rights in the long term.

In the meantime, migrants represent low-cost labour, a "windfall" for our societies which are focused increasingly only on profit.

For some unscrupulous governments and employers, insecure employment (temporary, sub-contracting, seasonal, posting, part-time) actually represents an opportunity to deregulate social rights.

Insecure employment also leads to social dumping and competition between workers, to the detriment of the workers themselves and to the community as a whole.

Migrant workers are consequently the first victims of these asocial policies and undocumented workers constitute an easy pool to address labour shortages at a lower cost. In this respect, equal pay for equal work is a fundamental principle for the integration and inclusion we defend and which we want to see at long last ratified and applied by the governments!

Furthermore, and this is what is known of killing two birds with one stone, such insecure employment stands in the way of any demands for pay raises for native workers.

This situation is unacceptable. As representatives and defenders of workers, we cannot tolerate it! Once again, the most vulnerable are manipulated for political ends to do with deregulation and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the very few. The European Trade Union Confederation says NO to that.

It is high time to put in place a real European asylum system and to revise the Dublin agreements, used by some to refuse to take in refugees from certain origins. ETUC strongly condemns any collective discrimination against refugees. Everyone has the right to claim asylum at the borders of any country!

Thus, in parallel with a fair share of indispensable reception of refugees by the different European countries, structural measures must be taken without fail to tackle the causes for the flows of migrants and refugees: conflict management, the fight against global warming, a regulation of a commercial policy, and voluntary cooperation for development.

That said, as certain analysts have suggested, we must also consider a "legalisation of migration that would do away with clandestine immigration and enable migrants to deploy their full economic potential in the host country. Their economic contribution is directed also to their country of origin: the financial contribution of migrants through their remittances to their country is at least three times higher than official development aid from industrialised countries (editor's note: source: political scientist François Gemenne, Sciences Po Paris) ».

ETUC wants another Europe, with greater solidarity, where the interests of multinationals do not take priority over the well-being of workers – Workers who, unlike capital, goods and services, would be the only ones not able to move freely!

We reaffirm our commitment in favour of integration and inclusion of all persons, migrants or non-migrants, in particular through work.

We refuse policies based on rejection, which turns the other into a pariah, and bring to mind the darkest periods of our history.

We are Europeans because we have values of solidarity and human rights that we want to preserve. And we intend to bring all our weight of European trade union to bear to help ensure that those values are respected!"