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The German Council Presidency – Migration Policy Expectations

On 1 July, Germany takes over the EU Council Presidency and faces a major agenda.

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asylum and migration policy. The refugee crisis of 2014 and 2015 has clearly demonstrated the need for pan-European solutions for all parties involved. Yet despite this realisation, the member states have still not been able to agree on a fair and effective distribution key and clear responsibilities in the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). During its Presidency, Germany should therefore devote a great deal of political capital to disentangling the positions that have been deadlocked for years.

Expectations for Germany are particularly high in the area of migration and asylum policy. First of all, Berlin must wait for the Commission's European Migration Pact, which was actually supposed to come in the spring, but which has slipped further down the political agenda because of the Corona pandemic. However, it is unlikely to include completely new proposals, as there is no lack of them anyway: With seven (!) legislative proposals, the European Commission has developed ambitious ideas for a European asylum and refugee policy, based on solidarity after the 2015 crisis. Now it is time to finally make progress and take steps towards implementation!

asylum and refugee policy. However, the further development of the Dublin and Asylum Procedure Directives continue to be blocked, particularly by the Visegrad states, which are opposed to a binding distribution key based on economic power and population size. If, however, an EU-wide solution is still not possible, a “coalition of the willing”, such as already exists between 11 EU Member States, including Germany and France, for the reception of underage refugees from Greece, represents a pragmatic solution. In any case, such a differentiated mechanism must remain open to other Member States and be backed up by sufficient reception capacities to mitigate the completely disproportionate burden on the external border states. States which are not willing to receive asylum seekers and refugees or to secure the external borders must be involved financially to a greater extent in order to contribute their share.

"Both Germany and the EU as a whole, benefit as business locations from migrant labour."

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Migration Policy is not a One-Way Street

In addition to the question of the distribution of refugees within Europe, Germany should also see the assumption of the Council Presidency as a window of opportunity to further shape not only European asylum policy but also immigration and foreign migration policy.

strengthened. Otherwise, a succession return policy cannot be implemented. Depending on the country of origin, specific package deals may be offered to specific target groups, which, in addition to cooperation in joint border management via Frontex and EU border guards, are tailored to each country. An important lever, especially for countries providing migrants with few prospects of permanent residence, is the promotion of regular migration routes.

Both Germany and the EU as a whole, benefit as business locations from migrant labour. For Germany, this means: to breathe life into the skilled worker immigration law that came into force in March 2020, by means of targeted agreements with partner states in suitable key sectors. Within the framework of transnational training partnerships, the interests of both German companies and countries of origin with high migration pressure could be taken into account. Germany in particular has already had good experience with its development policy commitment in this area, which can be drawn upon in the European context. Within the EU, networks of companies in the Member States should be established or used to achieve a Europe-wide effect.

causes of displacement in a sustainable manner and, by creating jobs in the main countries of origin, offer migrants without prospects of permanent residence real alternatives to irregular migration. In order to reduce future refugee movements, the EU must adopt a more integrated approach to its foreign, security and migration policy and use all civil and, if necessary, military means to contribute to the pacification of conflicts. Germany can take the lead in this respect by providing impetus for a stronger joint thinking on the partial aspects of migration within the framework of its agenda-setting function.

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