

***S*ome people are ashamed of the figures for admissions. I have always been ashamed of the deaths that the European Union pretended not to see for so many years before we took office. And I am proud of a European Union that saves lives at sea, although I regard each life that we, along with our friends in North Africa and in Africa, fail to save as a defeat for all of us.**

[\(Federica Mogherini, 21 June 2017\)](#)

The European response to the recent migration flows to the continent is everything but successful. Yet, the High Representative of the EU Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini could be proud of a few initiatives started by the Union thanks to its capacity of 'rightly reading' the political climate and to mobilising all resources at the EU's disposal. Migration policies have been at the top of Federica Mogherini's policy agenda since the early years of her dual appointment as High Representative of the EEAS and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) in 2014. Federica Mogherini represents over 500 million European citizens, yet her initiatives do not capture the public opinion as much as other national European leaders. Her contribution is an attempt to shed light on the important initiatives that the current EU High Representative is advancing in a domain like migration, currently considered among the most problematic and divisive in Europe.

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Migration flows pose an enormous challenge for the European Union, but this challenge cannot be overcome unless the EU is united in its response; unless the

root causes that are forcing people to leave their countries are tackled and unless migration starts to be perceived as a global issue that requires a multilateral approach. The EU High Representative Mogherini proved political leadership so far by launching a series of multi-level initiatives, aimed at managing the external dimension of migration, tackling its root causes, while bringing the discussion beyond Europe to a more global discussion.

A joint European response to save lives and fight smugglers

As soon as Mogherini, former Italian Foreign Minister, arrived in Brussels, she worked hard to make migration not a national but a European issue. Her primary objective was a European collective response to migration. Indeed, the first example of Mogherini's leadership in responding to the migration crisis was the launch of the [EUNAVFOR Med \(Sophia\) Operation](#) in the southern-central Mediterranean. Two months after around 900 migrants lost their lives in a shipwreck off the Libyan coast, this first-ever joint EU naval mission aiming at fighting human trafficking and arms smuggling was unanimously agreed on the 22nd of June 2015. It took two months to move from a political initiative to a full CSDP operation.

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During this 'remarkably short' period of time for an EU mission (Faleg and Blockmans 2015), a consensus was built among EU member states, capabilities were identified, and deployment began. Up to now, the mission has neutralized 545 smugglers, arrested 143 traffickers, trained Libyan coast guard officers, and most importantly, saved 44,251 lives ([EU Council, 2018](#)). "A drop in the ocean" as the same Mogherini has said in the recent documentary '[Europe at Sea](#)', produced by Annalisa Piras.

Nevertheless, the Operation Sophia represents a key component in the Mogherini-led process of building European unity around the external dimension of migration policy. It's already an important step, given that before the launch of the operation, Italy was alone in facing the crisis with the Italian mission Mare Nostrum.

An interregional approach to tackle the root causes of migration

In addition to the EUNAFOR Med CSDP operation, Mogherini moved the focus of the EU from border security to the root causes of migration. This move recognizes that the EU alone cannot resolve the migration issue and that the cooperation with local, regional and international actors is indispensable. Although this claim was not completely innovative within the EU discourse, initiatives show Mogherini's clear push to implement solid partnerships with the other key actors in the region. The idea of creating a more equal partnership with shared rights, but also shared responsibilities is reflected in the November 2017 meeting in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Here, Mogherini promoted the first African Union-European Union Ministerial Meeting since 2014. Ministers agreed to turn the meeting into an annual appointment to discuss agenda's priorities, such as the migration issue as: "We cannot close our eyes on the common responsibility we have, to protect lives, save lives, open also regular channels for migration and mobility, to offer economic alternatives to our young people in Africa" ([Mogherini 2017](#)).

Overall, beyond the €20 billion a year the EU and its member states provide to Africa, an additional €44 billion are expected from private investments. Working with African partners - both governments and NGOs - is therefore vital, not only to better target the money within the local communities but also to start a process that will be sustainable in the long-run

Although working with local partners and governments is sometimes difficult and

subject to criticism, there doesn't seem to be valid alternatives. Cooperation is necessary both for helping migrants get out of Libyan detention camps and to safely go back to their communities, but also to create better local conditions to tackle the primary reasons for leaving: precarious security conditions and no opportunities. Thanks to the partnerships and the support of the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), around 16,000 people were rescued from the camps of Libya and returned back to their communities. In addition to that, the [Africa Emergency Trust Fund](#) was launched in November 2015 to support the economic development of local communities, to prevent irregular migration and fight human trafficking, and to promote conflict prevention actions and rule of law enforcement. Overall, beyond the €20 billion a year the EU and its member states provide to Africa, an additional €44 billion are expected from private investments. Working with African partners – both governments and NGOs – is therefore vital, not only to better target the money within the local communities but also to start a process that will be sustainable in the long-run. This cannot be done unless the local governments are involved.

A global agreement on mass migration

The challenge of migration is not only affecting the European Union and its neighbours, but it should be understood and considered as a global trend. The tensions at the border between Mexico and the USA or the struggles of Asian nations facing growing waves of desperate migrants crossing the Indian Ocean to reach Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are just two examples of what should be considered a global challenge. Mogherini was very active on an international level, promoting in practice what the Global Strategy labelled as a rules-based global order, anchored within multilateralism and with the UN at its core. Her push for a more global management of migration resulted in the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants ([Resolution 71/1](#)) by the UN General Assembly in September 2016, and in the initiation of the development of two [global compacts](#), one for refugees and one on migration. The two compacts are in line with Mogherini's proposal to consider migration not only as a crisis to tackle but also as an opportunity if properly managed at a global level. In particular, after the withdrawal of the US in December 2017, Mogherini took the leadership of the process as this represented the “unique opportunity to bring forward the European vision on migration” ([Mogherini 2018](#)).

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Beyond these initiatives, the work that the European Union still needs to do on the issue of migration is huge. European national governments have the responsibility to find solutions to the other elements of the migration puzzle, of which the external dimension is only one piece. Yet, it is important to acknowledge some of the achievements reached so far. It is important to recognise that there is a political leadership within the EU that is proactively seeking to find solutions at European, regional, as well as at the global level, to one of the biggest challenges of our time. Finally, in times where the role of the European Union is questioned, it is important to show that the EU is not only an entity full of 'eurocrats' – as the EU is pictured by some national leaders – but that there are concrete actions that the European Union can and is implementing. The external actions that the EU is promoting to respond to the challenge of migration are not perfect, yet sometimes even researchers have the moral responsibility of sharing good initiatives without seeking for perfection.

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