

Dear MEP,

With seven days to go until Christmas, I am writing to you to wish you season's greetings and to appeal to you to use the holiday period to reflect on an issue which lies at the heart of the Christmas story.

It says that Jesus was born in a manger surrounded by animals because when Joseph and Mary reached Bethlehem, after travelling a great distance in difficult circumstances, they were told that there was no room at the Inn.

In his 2017 Christmas Day address, Pope Francis said: "So many other footsteps are hidden in the footsteps of Joseph and Mary. We see the tracks of entire families forced to set out in our own day. We see the tracks of millions of persons who do not choose to go away but, driven from their land, leave behind their dear ones."

It is fitting then that International Migrants Day should come just a week before Christmas. It gives us all an opportunity to reconsider how we treat those who are forced to leave their homes and turn to us in Europe for safety.

The starting point is set out in the UN's declaration for refugees and migrants, which states: "We are determined to save lives. Our challenge is above all moral and humanitarian."

However, according to the UN Migration Agency, 1,162 people have lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean so far in 2019. As a response to these tragedies, a resolution (B9-0154/2019) was proposed in the European Parliament in October on search and rescue.

It called for enhanced and proactive search and rescue operations, for ports to be kept open to NGO rescue boats, limiting unwarranted criminalisation of solidarity activists, and the establishment of safe and legal migration pathways to the EU. Your decision to vote against the resolution contributed to it being defeated by just two votes.

That's why we are writing to you on International Migrants Day and ahead of Christmas to ask that you reconsider your approach and, in the New Year, join us in supporting a new European approach to migration based on solidarity and respect.

For more information, please find our new special report on migrant workers:

- https://www.etui.org/content/download/37717/377713/file/HesaMag_20_Migrants_EN_Special_edition_ETUC_EN.pdf
- https://www.etui.org/fr/content/download/37718/377720/file/HesaMag_20_Migrants_FR_Special_edition_ETUC-FR.pdf

Yours sincerely,
Ludovic Voet
ETUC Confederal Secretary