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DRAFT MISSION REPORT

following the fact-finding visit to the Canary Islands from 15 to 17 September 2025 aiming to investigate petition No. 1268/2020 on the need for joint action by the European Union on migration

Committee on Petitions

Members of the mission

Bogdan Rzońca	(ECR) (Head of the delegation)
Sandro Ruotolo	(S&D)
Sebastian Kruis	(Pfe)

Ex officio Members:

Carmen Crespo Díaz	(PPE)
Sandra Gómez López	(S&D)
Jorge Buxadé Villalba	(Pfe)

Introduction

The objective of this fact-finding visit, as established in Article 234 of the Rules of Procedure, was to understand the situation on the ground and find ways to make EU Member States' asylum and migration systems fair, efficient, and also well-prepared, based on petition No. 1268/2020. The mission allowed the committee to engage in dialogue with the various stakeholders and to better understand the situation and reality in the Canary Islands, with visits to Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

The petitioner, who was not available to meet with the delegation, highlights the need for joint action by the European Union to solve the problem of irregular migration flows, particularly the one through the Mediterranean Sea. He considers that the steps taken to date have been somewhat disparate. The petitioner notes that some Member States are not meeting their commitments in this respect. The petitioner calls for the European Union to take joint action, as a political unit, to solve the issue of migration in the Mediterranean Sea and to sanction those countries that fail to comply with any future agreement.

Summary account of meetings

Monday, 15 September 2025, Tenerife

Visit to the Reception Centre “Las Raíces”

On 15 September, the delegation opened its mission with a visit to the Reception Centre “Las Raíces” in La Laguna, Tenerife where they met and had an exchange of views with national representatives, management of the centre and the organization ACCEM:

- **Mr Rafael Nuñez, Deputy Director General of Centres and Emergencies of the Migrations System, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations**
- **Mr Ernesto Mayoral, Director of the Reception Centre**
- **Mr Francisco Navarro, Representative of the NGO ACCEM**

They explained the purpose of the centre that is designed for short stays of migrant people, aiming to avoid overcrowding the system in the Canary Islands and to ensure no one is left homeless. It's a first point of contact before migrants are transferred to the mainland. They informed that, in the Canary Islands, there are 6.500 accommodation places (out of approximately 54,000 nationwide) for migrants spread across large centres like 'Las Raíces' and smaller centres specifically for families. These smaller centres are designed to keep families separate from single men.

Capacity and current occupancy: The centre has a maximum capacity of 4032 beds. Currently, it houses 650 people but has previously accommodated up to 4000.

Accommodation and facilities: The centre covers 60,000 square meters and was formerly a military barracks. It includes sectors for accommodation, administration buildings, a kitchen, dining areas, and security provisions. The centre is undergoing renovations due to the presence of asbestos, which needs to be sent to the mainland for recycling.

Transfer and processing: Migrants are transferred to the mainland via charter flights, normally

when there are large influx of migrants, or commercial flights. Upon arrival in the peninsula, they are housed in four large centres within military barracks and can choose to apply for international protection or leave the system after 6 months.

Services provided: ACCEM, an NGO, provides essential services such as clothing, hygiene items, and accommodation. There is also a security team of approximately 100 personnel (30 on duty at a time). The centre offers Spanish language classes, workshops on rights and asylum procedures, and recreational activities. The NGO also tries to detect and treat possible vulnerabilities from migrants.

Recent trends: There has been a 50% decrease in arrivals via the Atlantic route, attributed to increased efforts to prevent departures from origin countries.

Financial aspects: The centre's operation costs around 20 million EUR per year, funded through a complex action-based concertation (like in health and education related issues) and managed by the public company TRAGSA. Renovations are funded through European funds (PRTR and EMAS) with a loan of 24 million EUR. However, the representative of the Government was unable to indicate the cost of one accommodation place.

Organization and rules: Migrants are free to move around within the centre but must follow internal regulations. Alcohol and drug use are not permitted, and incidents are reported to the police. The centre aims to be inclusive and pluralistic, but currently houses primarily sub-Saharan migrants.

MEP interventions

The **Head of Delegation, MEP Bogdan Rzońca** showed his gratitude for the warm welcoming to this reception centre and after explaining the objective of the fact-finding visit gave the word to the MEPs participating in the mission:

MEP Sandro Ruotolo wanted to know that, if the aim of the reception centre was to have the migrants there the minimum time possible, and how long did it take for migrants to leave the reception centre. He also wanted to know the different alternatives given to migrants once they were transferred to the mainland, international protection or what else. He wanted to understand how the procedure works in Spain as he already knows how it is working in Italy, also as the other main country of first arrival and reception of migrants in the EU, citing Lampedusa. He also asked if there has been a decreased in the number of arrivals in recent times.

Mr Nuñez confirmed that this is a short stay reception centre because they needed every single bed for a newcomer. Some years ago, they were forced to host migrant people in hotel rooms, so that was the reason why this kind of first arrivals reception centres were established. The less time spent by the migrants in these reception centres, the better, giving room for the next migrant coming. At the end of 2024, there was a critical moment with maximal occupancy both in the Canary Islands and in the mainland and migrants kept on arriving. The reception system in the whole country has 54.000 accommodation places, adding up humanitarian and international protection places. Although there were thousands of people waiting to embark in the African coast, he confirms that there has been a 50% decrease in arrivals via the Atlantic route, attributed to increased efforts to prevent departures from origin countries. When migrants arrived in the mainland, this institution tries to put order to a

chaotic situation, people can have access to the international protection procedure, and it is for the Minister of Interior to decide if those people have the right to asylum. Those migrants that are in a humanitarian situation without requesting international protection need to leave the reception system in 6 months. He clarified that these centres are not a welfare or charitable organization, they are part of the State reception system regulated by a concrete legislation concerning international protection and humanitarian aid.

MEP Jorge Buxadé stated that he was outside this reception centre in 2024 and there was a big number of migrants from Senegal, Mali, Morocco who informed him that were staying outside because they had been punished. He wanted to know how the system of entry/exit of migrants works, if they have breakfast in the centre and then go out and they just come back to sleep at night. He also asked for the reaction of the managing staff if the migrants arrive with clear symptoms of being drunk or having used drugs. He also asked for the police reaction and the coordination with the representatives of the reception centre if crimes are committed inside.

Mr Nuñez argued that the migrants in this centre were in a situation of freedom of movement and they were not under arrest or detained. They could leave and enter the centre with some rules and limitations. He acknowledged that, when they were 4.000 migrants in this centre last year and they were going outside, it had an impact in the life of the municipality close by. He informed of what they explained to the migrants in the contextualization activities and basic rules of behaviour.

Mr Mayoral explained that every migrant must show their belongings when they enter the centre. Rings and other dangerous objects (knives) or substances (drugs) are removed. In the case of drugs, the police forces are immediately informed, and they decide what to do. Concerning incidents inside the centre, the representative differentiated among levels, the slightest incidents are resolved by the educators, interpreters and other qualified staff of the centre. For more serious cases, the intervention of the police is required. He confirmed that there have been very few serious cases.

Mr Navarro informed about the schedules of the centre, insisting that migrants can enter and leave freely, as they are not detained, but during the night the gate is close. For late arrivals, they let migrants enter but they remind them about the rules of the centre. The reason why they let migrants in it is that the centre is located in a dark and very cold area and the aim of the centre is to avoid leaving migrants on the street during the night. They do not let in migrant people with clear symptoms of being drunk or having used drugs, as in any other public building. The staff of the centre explains this situation to the migrants. He affirmed that the NGO in charge of this centre does not apply any kind of punishment. In the event that a resident failed to comply with the rules of the centre there were formal warning procedures or even expulsion from the centre, for the most serious cases. He also explained that in the contextualization workshops they work on key issues such as gender, environmental prevention, waste management and recycling and they collaborate with a lot of public institutions, municipalities who invite migrants to participate in these activities to integrate and not isolate the resident.

The visit continued with an external tour to the reception centre where the representatives showed and explained the participants in the mission the different parts of the centre: dining room, kitchen, activity centre, dorms with a capacity of 72 beds in each tent, showers and sanitary installations, etc. The representative explained that migrants are not divided by ages,

or nationalities but they are organized in order of arrival aiming to be inclusive and pluralistic.

Meeting with Frontex and EUAA

The first meeting in the afternoon was with representatives of Frontex and EUAA:

- **Mr Marco Fantinato, Frontex Contingent Commander,**
- **Mr Mariusz Kawczynski, Head of Unit 24/7 Operations Centre/ Acting Head of Contingent Management Unit**
- **Mr Dimitrios Pagidas, EUAA Senior Coordinator-Fields Operations**
- **Ms Begoña Santos, EUAA Coordinating Officer for Spain**

Frontex representatives stated that they actively support Spain by deploying officers and resources for border management, particularly during peak travel seasons (like summer) in ports (Algeciras, Tarifa, Ceuta) and airports, focusing on safe travel, migration control (especially Western Mediterranean/Canaries), and fighting cross-border crime like drug smuggling, utilizing joint operations (Minerva, Indalo) and advanced tech. They informed that Spain also receives EU funding through Frontex for reception centres and surveillance systems (SIVE) to manage migration flows.

Key areas of Frontex activity in Spain:

Maritime borders (Strait of Gibraltar/Canaries): Operations like Minerva (summer ferry traffic) and Indalo assist with sea surveillance, search and rescue, and managing arrivals from North Africa and West Africa.

Airports: Frontex supports border checks at major international airports, assisting with entry/exit controls.

Land borders (Ceuta & Melilla): There are calls for increased Frontex presence to protect these EU-Africa land borders.

Anti-crime: Officers help detect forged documents, stolen cars, and disrupt drug smuggling routes (hashish, cocaine).

How Frontex supports Spain:

Personnel: Deploys experienced border guards and experts from other EU countries.

Equipment: Provides vessels, aircraft, and surveillance technology.

Funding: Offers EU funding for reception centres, registration processes, and border surveillance systems (like SIVE).

Joint operations: Coordinates specific missions tailored to Spain's needs, often during high-pressure periods.

EUAA representatives explained that the EUAA works with Spain, especially in the Canary Islands, to support its overwhelmed asylum and reception systems due to high migrant arrivals, providing expertise, training for staff, and help with new reception models, vulnerability procedures, and managing large influxes, particularly in places like Las Palmas

and Arguineguín, addressing overcrowding and humanitarian needs.

Key EUAA actions in the Canary Islands:

Operational support: Since 2020, the EUAA has deployed experts and developed operational plans with Spain to strengthen reception, especially as the islands face significant pressure from sea arrivals.

Capacity building: Training for reception staff and improving procedures for identifying vulnerable people (like children or trafficking victims) are key focus areas.

Developing new models: Assisting Spain in creating more effective, permanent reception structures to replace ad-hoc emergency facilities.

Monitoring and data: Gathering information on site management, standards, and processes in reception centres across islands like Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

MEP interventions

MEP Sandro Ruotolo referred to the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean as a real cemetery where thousands of migrants die every year trying to find a better life away from their home countries and asked whether Frontex and the EUAA can do more to avoid this. He also mentioned the case of Turkey where the organised mafia used up to 13 commercial containers to smuggle migrants into Italy. He believed that the smugglers are not the poor drivers who are paid 5.000 EURO or those migrants who are granted a free journey to Europe, but the well organised criminal groups, war lords. He argues that we need to focus on the political management of migration. He asked if there are agreements with transit countries or origin countries. He also underlined the positive aspects of migration, as the European Union faces a demographic crisis, and it needs people (workforce) as also confirmed by Eurostat.

MEP Sebastian Kruis asked about the security checks and screening procedure carried out upon the arrival of irregular migrants, including how criminal records and other or preventive security considerations are addressed, and about the role of Frontex in this regard.

MEP Sandra Gómez pointed out the reduction in the number of arrivals in 2025 in comparison with previous years and reminded what representatives from the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations have stated during the morning about the cooperation and good work in the countries of origin and requested the opinion of the Frontex representatives. She also wanted to talk about the reasons why irregular migration takes place, because it is important to understand them. She highlighted economic reasons but also political or military conflicts. Although during this mission we are focusing on the border control and migration management it is also essential to analyse how many people arrive to destination and how many of them die during the journey because there are not enough data concerning this dramatic situation. She also asked about the reasons why the price of the journey have dropped in recent times.

MEP Jorge Buxadé stated that he was the only Member present in the previous LIBE mission to the El Hierro that took place in May 2025. He already listened at that time to similar interventions from Frontex and the EUAA concerning the migration process. He highlighted that, paradoxically, El Hierro is the island furthest from the African continent and

the one with the highest number of arrivals. According to him, this has no logic, and he asked Frontex if this is a strategy of the organized mafias to force maritime rescue operations. He also asked about the resources that Frontex may have and share and that the Spanish authorities may not oversee mafia's transport vessels. He requested to know how the mafias were monitored or controlled, knowing that at least one member of the mafia was travelling in each boat. To the EUAA he asked about the percentage of people entering in the Canary Islands that request asylum and the percentage of those who are granted asylum or any other kind of international protection. He also wanted to know how many of the migrants requested this international protection in their first point of arrival (El Hierro) and how many of them request this asylum when they are already in the mainland or when the expulsion procedure has already started. He pointed out that many of them may request this asylum after being informed by the NGOs or lawyers assisting them.

Mr Fantinato started replying concerning the assets Frontex has in the Canary Islands, that they do not have helicopters, no aircrafts, no boats. Whatever happens at sea falls under the international law and the main authority is SASEMAR in Spain. Frontex offices are based in the temporary attention centres for migrants (CATES). Every time there is an arrival they have a team going there and provide screening, registration of biometrical data and debriefing activities in cooperation with the Spanish national police and supported by interpreters and cultural mediators. No assets on the field. He highlighted that international cooperation is key and that since May this cooperation has been strengthened in the Western African region. He pointed out two forms of cooperation with third countries, the status agreement, it is an international binding agreement under the lead of the European Commission, foreseen when Frontex standing corps need to be deployed in the country. This is a fully fledged operational deployment with a longer process. The other form of cooperation is a working arrangement signed between Frontex and one of the national authorities within the third country. This is a bit limited as Frontex cannot deploy people on the third country, it is used for an exchange of information, provide training and exchange observers without executive powers, faster procedure but it still needs the implication of the European Data Protection Supervisor, an opinion by the Commission and signed by the management board of Frontex. There are positive developments with Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia in relation to the working arrangements and also on the status agreements. Security checks are key, according to Frontex, although migration is important, trying to dismantle the criminal organizations behind irregular migration is essential. They work in close cooperation with the national police and all the screening and debriefing activities are under the remit of national authorities because they are the ones having access to the national data basis. Frontex officers do not have access to national data basis nor perform any kind of scrutiny or check upon arrival of irregular immigrants, but this may change in the near future. Security is under the remit of national authorities. He mentioned the Cape Verde project that has the capacity of using satellites to provide intelligence in third countries to both civil guard and national police forces, as an early warning system. He informed that the presence of Frontex in Spain is negotiated every year based on an operational plan. Frontex is ready to scale up their support, if requested, even to provide assets but, for now, they are only involved in migration management activities. Frontex is also deploying a liaison officer in Morocco and in Senegal covering also Mauritania and Gambia.

Mr Kawczynski confirmed that, on the assets, their presence in the Atlantic is very different to the one in the Central Mediterranean region. In the Canary Islands they provide with early detection warning, but the offer to provide assets to Spain stands, in case it is needed. So far, the Spanish government has not requested any additional asset even though Frontex have

offered them. He insisted in the decrease of migrants arriving to the Canary Islands, 12.000 people up to September. This numbers are not exceeding now Spanish response capacity. They offer eyes in the sky to see what is departing from Africa. This may prevent some tragic situations and drifting boats. Root causes are manly economic but also manipulated by the smugglers. He mentioned the example of the recent activation of the route from Egypt and Libya towards Crete dropping the prices for a journey down from 3.000 EURO to 1.000 EURO. Sometimes these are cases of instrumentalization to put pressure in some countries. Frontex helps Member States to apprehend the smugglers drivers, but they are also paid by others, and they are not the main objective. Frontex has no investigative power like Europol, but they may be able to do more using the open-source intelligence.

Mr Pagidas answered the question about the registration of asylum cases stating that EUAA is providing support to the Ministries that have asked for help. The operational plan came from a request from the Ministry of Inclusion, however, the Ministry of Interior has not requested EUAA support, so EUAA is not involved in the registration and cannot provide an exact break down.

Ms Santos, was informed that, concerning the number of arrivals, on that very same day, 15 September 2025, a cayuco with more than 200 arrived to El Hierro, and two more arrived during the weekend to Gran Canaria. She pointed out that this is the season when more boats arrive, due to the fact that weather and sea conditions improve. Following the currents, migrants normally arrive where they can, not where they want. As they are departing from Senegal or Gambia, further away from Spain, they also arrive to the west island of El Hierro. Those departing from Moroccan or Saharan coasts they arrive to Fuerteventura or Lanzarote. She explained what the EUAA do in terms of providing information according to the current Directive and the one include in the Pact. She highlighted that information is a right that every migrant people have. The EUAA explain to them what it is the right to asylum. Migrants arrive in terrible conditions and stay in those temporary sites just for two or three days. They need interpreters and some concepts need to be explained. She underlined that the case of unaccompanied minors was particularly worrying because it had increased a lot in recent times.

Meeting with regional authorities

The next meeting took the delegation to the Regional Government premises to meet with the **President Fernando Clavijo and Vice President Manuel Domínguez** of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.

Summary of the key points raised, focusing on the requests and concerns of the Canary Islands government:

Disproportionate impact: The Canary Islands are facing a "disproportionate" number of migrant arrivals – 14,000 this year, following 47,000 last year. They feel overwhelmed, especially given their status as a fragile, peripheral region.

Distinction between adults and minors: They want the EU to establish a clear distinction in policy between adult migrants (State responsibility) and unaccompanied minors (which they believe should not be solely the responsibility of the autonomous community). They argue that currently, 65% of unaccompanied minors arriving in Spain/Europe are landing in the Canary Islands.

Funding disparity: Despite €560 million in EU aid to Spain last year, the Canary Islands have not received any of these funds. They had to allocate €192 million from their own regional budget last year to manage the situation. This year, they've received no earmarked funding.

Frontex deployment: They urge the EU to deploy Frontex (border control agency) not just at the borders, but also in countries of origin/transit (Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco) – even without a request from Spain.

Security concerns: They highlight security gaps, citing the recent grounding of a Moroccan fishing vessel off Lanzarote that went undetected. They believe stronger border protection is needed to save lives.

Support for minors: They are providing care for approximately 5,000 minors, facing challenges in providing adequate education, psychological support (due to trauma experienced during the journey), and dealing with overcrowding.

International relations: The Canary Islands government stresses the importance of EU engagement with countries of origin and transit to address the root causes of migration.

Overall gratitude: They express deep gratitude for the attention and visits from EU institutions, emphasizing the importance of understanding the situation firsthand due to the islands' geographical and political distance.

MEP interventions

MEP Ruotolo as Italian he could perfectly understand what the regional authorities have stated, and he considered that managing migration is the responsibility of a continent and not only of the countries of first entry. He thanked for the clarification concerning the percentage of minors arriving to the Canary Islands in comparison with the rest of Spain (65%). He also mentioned the need of migration for Europe. The issue is to control the influx. Europe needs to discuss how to distribute these arrivals. The other issue is border control. He also referred to the countries of transit that should also be taken into account.

MEP Kruis considered that the situation in the Canary Islands was completely unacceptable. A petition was submitted more than four years ago, and things have not changed during all this time. He stated that this was not an European problem but a neighbourhood problem. He argued that more migrants are coming because they think that if they reach the Canary Islands they would be transfer to the mainland or to France or other European country. According to him, this illusion should be avoided to end the pulling effect. He supported solving this issue with push backs and deportations. He also asked the Vice President why there was no member of the EPP in the Delegation supporting him today.

MEP Gómez requested confirmation that the number of arrivals have decreased during this year as it was stated in previous meetings and the reasons why. The other issue she wanted to tackle was managing migrants and particularly unaccompanied minors. She also wanted to highlight the human part of this situation trying to avoid politization. She also wanted to ask about security issues. She also referred to the controversy about the redistribution of unaccompanied minors to other regions.

MEP Buxadé asked about the differentiation between minors and adults and if they have conducted age tests, as they were done in Aragón where they showed that 70% of the migrants tested were adults. He referred to the smugglers that cause casualties and that are not prosecuted. He inquired whether the data collected from arriving illegal aliens matches the reality and how control over criminals is carried out. He also asked whether this reality has been shared with the Spanish national authorities.

President Clavijo argued that the fact that people arrive to the Canarian coasts showed the failure of the border control system. The suspension of the Sahel mission of the EU was bad news for everyone. He argued that no one should be criminalized because they look for a better future. During the previous century half a million Canarians migrate to Latin America and Europe looking for a better future. He requested that the Asylum and Migration Pact should be reinforced and developed during this legislature focusing on cooperation and development. The new world order also affects directly the African continent with the tension between Russia, China and the United States. He gave the example of a police officer in Mauritania that has a salary of 12 euros per month that is an easy prey for the organized crime and mafias. Europe must be more present in Africa. They have agreements with Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco and specific programs (En Tierra Firme) to prepare minors and try to reduce the arrivals. In Senegal, 10% of their GDP comes from the money migrants send to their families (remittances). He confirmed that there was a reduction in the number, but it is still a complicated situation. Concerning minors, nearly all regional parties have supported the regional migration pact, and this has helped managing the situation without politicizing it. Nowadays, there is a national system to manage unaccompanied minors with a procedure to transfer the minor where the best interest of the minor is key. He also confirmed that they conduct age test to proof that the migrants are minors, if they are doubts after a first visual identification done by the NGOs upon arrival. He stressed that it was dangerous to mix up the feeling of insecurity with migration. There are smugglers that are detained. The first demand from the regional authorities is not money. They have asked that minors requesting international protection should be taken in charge by the central authorities, there has to be solidarity and territorial balance, and that financial responsibility should also be shared among regions.

Vice-President Dominguez argued that irregular migration should not be the way of covering the decrease in population in European countries. There are ways to have regular and legal migration that would help solve this issue. They want to find solutions. Redistributing minors may not solve the problem of migration but it helps the Canary Islands and also Europe. Even with a reduction in arrivals, the situation is difficult to control. Concerning security is linked to the impossibility of controlling its borders. Replying to the question regarding the absence of representatives from the Partido Popular and the European People's Party, the Vice-President stated that he considered his own presence to be sufficient representation.

In a second round of interventions, **MEP Ruotolo** clarified his first intervention. According to Eurostat, by 2100 Europe's population will drop by 6%. Migration is nothing new. Europe needs migration. Just remember Germany after the WWII which needed Turkish workers for their post-war industry. He wondered how the flow of migrants could be controlled. In the past, he explained that 8 out of 10 migrants in Italy wanted to go to the UK or to Scandinavia. It's about governance of migratory flows.

MEP Kruis made some final statements about the sentence stating that Europe needs migrants. He also argued that what criminalised migration was living in the streets. Politicians

should stop money talks and look for solutions. He expressed the need to rethink the approach towards immigration because this was more an invasion.

MEP Buxadé asked about the percentage of women and minors arriving to the Canary Islands. He replied that he was not criminalising migration, stressing that stating facts is not criminalisation and that crimes committed by smugglers and illegal aliens often had no consequences with the perpetrators walking freely in the streets of Europe. He criticised the lack of data exchange between Member States.

MEP Gómez thanked the tone of the speakers' interventions and even though she would disagree in some of the issues related to management she felt the meeting had been very useful and productive. She acknowledged the sincere concern of the regional authorities for the people arriving to the Canary Islands and their real needs. She wanted to have a clarification on the questions related to humanitarian aid and the project that the President had mentioned that helped to reduce the migratory flows.

President Clavijo explained that they had adopted two projects, one called "En Tierra Firme" to form people at their countries of origin (Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania) with vocational training teachers in three sectors (clothing, construction and agriculture). The objective is to integrate those youngsters into the labour market in collaboration with Spanish companies based on the field. He argued that this was working very well. Once the minors arrive to the Canary Islands in collaboration with the Chambers of commerce of the two Canarian provinces, they are given courses to learn abilities and competences in the tourism sector. For the construction sector it was not possible because the collective agreements request that the participants are adults. He informed that they also have a transitional program (for 18 to 21 years old) in the construction sector, but most of the migrants leave to the mainland. 75% of employment rate.

Concerning figures: 201 boats have arrived in the Canary Islands until 31 August 2025 (47 pneumatic boats, 8 "pateras" and 143 "cayucos", 2 unchecked and one stowaway). 55 coming from Morocco, 124 from Mauritania, 12 from Senegal, 3 from Gambia, 1 from Ivory Coast, 2 from Conakry and 1 from Mali. A total of 12. 249 migrants, 9.955 men, 782 women, 192 minors coming with their parents, 1.320 unaccompanied minors, 629 with doubts concerning their age.

Tuesday, 16 September 2025 - Gran Canaria

Visit to the Reception Centre "Canarias 50"

On 16 September, the delegation started its second day of mission visiting the Reception Centre "Canarias 50", in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The speakers focused on the context of the migration situation in the Canary Islands and the centre's operations.

- **Mr Rafael Núñez, Deputy Director General of Centres and Emergencies of the Migrations System, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations**
- **Ms Tatiana Dorrego González, Representative of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations**

- **Ms Isabel Gutiérrez Boadas, Director of the reception centre “Canarias 50”**
- **Mr Enrique Suárez Quintana and Ms Fátima Gutiérrez Gámez, Red Cross Representatives**

Establishment of Centres: In 2022, 15,000 people arrived in the Canary Islands, increasing to 39,000 in 2023, leading to what it was called the "Canary Islands crisis." This prompted the creation of reception centres on the mainland.

2024 arrivals and reduction in 2025: In 2024, 46,000 people arrived in the Canary Islands. However, there's been a 52% reduction in arrivals compared to the same period in 2023, with 12,000 arrivals recorded so far.

Centre structure: The representatives highlighted the existence of two independent centres within the same location. One specifically addresses individuals seeking international protection, and another is dedicated to unaccompanied minors.

Logistics and organization: The centre's director explained the logistics and organization of the facility. Representatives from the Red Cross detailed the social intervention processes.

The Canarias 50 centre has three phases: Phase One was initially left vacant and not intended for use. But, in March 2025, the Spanish Supreme Court issued an order with a precautionary measure following a request from the Government of the Canary Islands. The Government requested assistance in managing the thousands – around 5,000 – unaccompanied minors who had arrived in the Canary Islands since the 2023 crisis. They requested that the State take responsibility for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, as the State in Spain is responsible for managing the reception of asylum seekers. This is the reason why Phase One is now a centre for foreign unaccompanied minors

In Spain, the Autonomous Communities (regional governments) are responsible for the management and reception of unaccompanied minors, according to their Statutes of Autonomy. The Supreme Court determined, in a precautionary measure (not a final judgment), that the State should temporarily accommodate these unaccompanied minors seeking international protection within its reception resources.

Currently, Spanish international protection system has places for adults and adults with minors, accommodated in other centres. Therefore, to comply with the court order, a temporary centre was agreed upon to ensure these unaccompanied minors spend as little time as possible in Phase One of Canarias 50. This centre has a capacity of 250 places. Its purpose is to provide social intervention to assess the needs of these minors and, in the best interests of the child, transfer them to a mainland resource that adequately meets those needs. To date, and since the opening of Canarias 50 (June/July 2025), 236 people have been attended to, and 87 unaccompanied minors have been transferred to centres on the mainland. The representative emphasized that all these unaccompanied minors are asylum seekers; other minors are under the guardianship of the Canary Islands government, though the Canary Islands government retains custody in all cases.

The Director of Canarias 50 divided her presentation into four parts: context (explaining the old infrastructure and modular buildings), location and centre layout, key statistics from the last year, and finally, a look at the daily management of the centre.

“Canarias 50” covers an area of approximately 27,000 square metres. The centre is divided into three sectors. These divisions remain for organizational, preventative, and logistical purposes. Users of these sectors enter and exit through separate doors. Each sector has modular rooms with a capacity of 76 to 100 users, all equipped with bathrooms and showers. The centre has a capacity of 850 contracted places. During the visit, there were 491 people present. Almost 4,000 people have entered the centre in 2025. The majority are under 30 years old. Arrivals tend to decrease in the first half of the year and increase in the second, influenced by wind patterns. The majority of nationalities are from Mali, other sub-Saharan African countries, Senegal, Morocco, Gambia, Guinea, Pakistan, and Albania.”

Cruz Roja Representative - Intervention Process- explained the various phases of the centre's operation, from initial reception to transfer to the mainland.

Once people arrive by boat at the Arguineguín dock, they receive an initial health screening by the Red Cross emergency team. They are then referred to the CATE (Centre for the Attention of Temporary Immigrants), where they cannot stay for more than 72 hours. Here, they undergo a second health screening by the Canary Islands Health Service, identifying vulnerabilities and health issues, particularly related to the conditions of the sea voyage. People arriving in the Canary Islands have often been at sea for 5 to 12 days, facing harsh conditions, resulting in sunburns and other issues.

After this, a third screening is conducted, depending on the time of arrival. The Red Cross then proceed with reception, signing the centre's rules, and orientation workshops. Upon entry into the humanitarian assistance program, they provide an identification bracelet and a basic kit containing clothing, personal hygiene items, bed linen, and blankets. Following initial reception, there are orientation workshops led by their technical staff and representatives from the Ministry.

They offer Spanish classes (two hours per user per week), psychology and conflict resolution workshops, cultural activities, gender equality workshops, sports, and horticultural activities. They also arrange medical appointments and police interviews, collaborating with authorities to identify vulnerabilities. The most common nationality they have hosted this year is from Mali, a country currently experiencing an armed conflict, requiring significant vulnerability assessments for international protection followed by Senegal, Gambia and Morocco. They maintain direct contact with ACNODE (Agency for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors), who visit the centre weekly.

The centre operates from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM, ensuring a safe environment and positive relations with the local community. Meals are served in shifts. They also provide laundry services and, as we relocate the hairdresser, that service will be available as well. The final phase is the transfer to mainland resources, organised by the Red Cross, including documentation assistance and informational sessions.

MEP interventions

MEP Ruotolo focused his question on the different treatment of unaccompanied minors requesting international protection and those that do not request this protection and wondered whether this protection should be compulsory, due to the fact that they are minors.

The Ministry representatives stated that tutors should be the ones requesting that international

protection on behalf of the minors and not all of them request that protection.

MEP Gómez asked about the difference between guardianship and being tutor of the unaccompanied minors. She argued that it was questioned where the funds should come from and who in is charge of managing those resources.

The Ministry representatives pointed out that all minors, whether foreigners or nationals, were in a situation of need and are taken care of by the competent centres of the regional authorities. The Supreme Court has ruled out, preventively, that the central authorities need to take care of the unaccompanied minors requesting international protection and that is why the Centre “Canarias 50”, under state funding, is hosting those minors. The Supreme Court also ruled that the tutors of all unaccompanied minors should be the regional government of Canarias, while the guardianship of minors requesting international protection is for the central authorities.

MEP Kruis asked about if they had figures on how many illegal immigrants, particularly those who are unaccompanied minors, were women. He also asked about the cost of running the centre and how it was funded. He also asked about what they were doing for the people in the neighbourhood and if there is any support scheme for the neighbours of the centre.

The Ministry representatives stated that they did not have the data concerning the number of unaccompanied minors that were women, but she confirmed that they did not have a single woman in the centre “Canarias 50”. There are specific centres for women. In general terms, migrant women are 8% of the total number (all ages), so 92% of the arriving irregular migrants are men. The Red Cross representative are in contact with the neighbourhood and local authorities. They do activities with educational centres and other social activities fostering integration trying to improve the relation with the citizens. There are not structured plans but more occasional plans. Concerning the costs and funding, there is not a specific funding but an estimate for this centre is around 15 million euros not being an exact number.

MEP Buxadé asked if the health intervention that they were talking about in this centre was also present in other centres, such as in “Las Raíces” where that information was missing. He inquired if the aim of the centre was to “vacate beds” as it happens in “Las Raíces. He also wanted to know if the process they follow in this centre is the same one as the one they had in the other centre. He also pointed out that there was clearly a public concern by citizens living in La Isleta that were denouncing violence, alcoholism and drug trafficking in the area and who often demonstrate against this centre.

The Ministry representatives stated that the migration policy has to be done rigorously. They confirmed that the health prevention and first aid services are done from the first moment a migrant arrives to the coast of Spain. Red Cross clarified that a doctor comes to the centre to avoid logistic problems in the health services. They inform migrants about basic behaviour rules and schedules, and they affirmed that there have not been violent incidents in the area, but they stated that the Red Cross did not operate outside the centre. They coordinate effort with local authorities and police forces in the neighbourhood.

Ms Gutiérrez, Director of the reception centre, acknowledged that residents of the surrounding neighbourhood regularly submit complaints, including complaints related to failures to respect traffic rules, as well as drug and alcohol-related issues. These issues are addressed by the centre with dedicated programs. She stated that migrants often find it

difficult to adapt to neighbourhood life, as they come from ways of life that are not easily compatible with local coexistence and stay for a short period of time. She further acknowledged that the centre seeks to direct irregular immigrants through an exit that does not lead into the centre of neighbourhood in order to avoid conflicts, although this is not always possible when the number of residents is high. The centre remains in contact with the police to alert them when there are incidents, and she confirms that the police have increased their presence in the neighbourhood.

Meeting with neighbourhood representatives of La Isleta

This visit was followed by a meeting with the representatives of the Platform of Neighbourhood Associations of La Isleta.

Mr Iván González, spokesperson of the Platform, addressed the delegation on immigration, expressing deep concern about the impact of five years of irregular immigration on his neighbourhood. He thanked that the voices of residents are finally being heard but criticizes what he saw as a performative response from authorities (i.e. cleaning the streets the days prior to the arrival of the Delegation) – a “puppet show” for the press – rather than real solutions.

He detailed how the Canarias 50 facility, initially intended as a green space and temporary shelter for no more than 3 years, has become a permanent reception centre for migrants arriving by boat, receiving a €20 million investment while the neighbourhood deteriorates. He argued that the huge increase in the arrival of illegal immigrants is driven by economic and political interests, not solidarity, and points to a growing perception of insecurity.

Mr González emphasized the solidarity and open-mindedness of his community, rejecting accusations of xenophobia. However, he recounted incidents, including a recent attack on a 17-year-old girl burned by an illegal immigrant¹ in an illegally squatted house after one month since his arrival in Spain, and expresses frustration with the lack of action despite knowing about potential risks. He questions why authorities don't act on information about criminals arriving with migrants.

He painted a picture of a community overwhelmed by the sheer number of arrivals (over 50,000 in a year, 150,000 in five years), facing declining quality of life, and feeling ignored by politicians focused on electoral gains. He asked the delegation if they've considered the impact on residents, particularly those struggling financially, stating that while one in four children living in the neighbourhood does not eat four meals a day, illegal migrants do not lack food, and that this assistance is not provided to local residents.

He expressed concerns about the “pull factor” encouraged by political decisions, resulting in insecurity in the streets—particularly affecting women—and the lack of consequences for the actions of illegal migrants, who are perceived as acting with impunity due to the absence of effective return mechanisms.

¹ He referred to an incident in which a 17-year-old individual was initially accused in connection with a fire that caused severe injuries to a minor. Subsequent investigation, including the victim's testimony and the evidence examined at that stage, led the investigating court to lift the suspect's pre-trial detention, as the available elements did not substantiate the allegation of an intentional act. The judicial proceedings are ongoing, and no final ruling has been issued.

He mentioned that Enrique Sánchez, former director of the Canarias 50 centre, was asked by the neighbourhood how many of those arriving at the centre commit crimes, to which he replied that the figure was approximately 6%.

He concluded by warning about the potential for migration to create tension and erode social cohesion, stating that La Isleta is a prime example of this. He asked the fundamental question of why people risk their lives and pay so much to reach Europe, arguing it's because they are allowed to, and called for genuine solutions based on understanding and cooperation.

MEP interventions

MEP Ruotolo stated that he had been dealing with the issue of migration since he was a journalist back in Italy. He understood the concern expressed by the neighbours because they live close to a centre where many people from different countries and cultures gather together. He did not want to leave aside the possible conflicts that may arise, but he also wanted to debate what would be the alternative to this kind of centres. He also pointed out to the number of migrants that did not make it and died in their journey to reach the Canary Islands or Italy in the Mediterranean Sea. He acknowledged that the islands is a zone of first entry, then migrants would be transferred to the mainland or travel to other European countries. The dramatic situation was due to the massive arrivals during the previous years. The neighbour's representative argued that they are still living that situation of mass influx with the good tides period coming. 700 people have arrived during that week. It is sad to be happy only if half of the number of migrants make it to the Canary Islands. He stated that there was a risk of stigmatisation. In Italy they have a cemetery under the waves. They have to understand that people are fleeing hunger, conflicts etc. Our work should be focused on Africa and on the countries these people are coming from.

MEP Kruis expressed his solidarity with the neighbour's representative. He stated that this is not an European problem but a neighbourhood problem. He talked about the drastic measures such as push backs and deportations that were needed in order to solve this situation. He stated that Europe was part of the problem.

The neighbour's representative replied that the regional government sued the central government in order to take care of the unaccompanied minors requesting international protection. He was surprised by the fact that Europe could not give solutions. He wondered why Frontex was not activated. He thought Spain needed legal and regular migration. He questioned why we need illegal immigrants when there are more than 2 million of unemployed Spaniards.

MEP Buxadé asked about the meeting with the Director of the centre "Canarias 50" and the measures taken to solve the conflicts with migrants. He wanted to know the concrete situation that the neighbours are suffering.

The neighbour's representative replied with the same answered he was given by the Ministry of Interior stating that the feeling of insecurity is intangible and cannot be measured or registered. They had made different proposals to improve the situation. He thought that there was not a clear control of the movement of migrants. He argued that had little to no expectation from the outcome of the meetings with the authorities.

MEP Gómez wanted to focus and give value to this mission. She wanted to talk about that

intangible feeling of insecurity and the alleged cultural clash among communities. She stated that, according to the figures, the crime cases in the municipality is one of the lowest in Spain. She wanted to look for a solution to this issue. For example, Italy has doubled the number of migrants arriving to the country. The most effective measure is to work in third countries of origin and transit. She questioned some statements by the neighbourhood representative, Mr Iván González, who might have suggested that there is collaboration between institutions and mafia - which would be very serious accusations. At the same time, she questioned his allegations of impunity and asked what leads him to this kind of conclusion. Is there a dereliction of duty? Finally, she concluded that the delegation seeks clear and correct data.

The neighbour's representative showed his concern with the petty crimes committed by migrants and the lack of control because of the activities around "Canarias 50". He insisted in the feeling of insecurity that the neighbours are suffering.

Meeting with members of the judicial power

The first afternoon meeting was with members of the judicial power and prosecutors in charge of unaccompanied minors and migration issues.

Mr Juan Luis Lorenzo Bragado, President of the High Court of Justice of the Canary Islands

His intervention had the intention of contributing to facilitate the knowledge of irregular immigration via the sea route to the Canary Islands. He referred the delegation to the report – to simplify and to advance the understanding of this reality – which he submitted the day before. He provided a general description of the issues addressed in this report. First, to provide context, the phenomenon of irregular immigration via the sea route to the Canary Islands, which first emerged in 1994 and manifested with particular relevance during the 'cayuco' crisis of 2006. This subsided in subsequent years but reactivated as a consequence of the COVID crisis.

Then, he analysed the repercussions of this phenomenon on the judicial bodies of the Canary Islands. Spanish law responds to this phenomenon primarily through two avenues: the criminal route, through prosecution in line with international conventions regarding the crime of facilitating irregular immigration, attempting to determine those who are the so-called 'patera' and 'cayuco' operators, and also associated crimes such as manslaughter, reckless injury, criminal association, and, frequently, human trafficking. And, from an administrative perspective, the constitution of irregular entry, which refers to the migrants themselves. This leads to an increase in the activity in both criminal and administrative-contentious bodies. In the case of the criminal jurisdiction, he exemplified this with the Court of first instance of El Hierro, in Valverde, El Hierro – an island with just over ten thousand inhabitants – a very small judicial unit, which has also been affected by the increase in cases related to irregular migration. There is a clear seasonal pattern in arrivals. He also noted the data relating to deaths recorded, at least according to judicial statistics. However, these figures likely represent only a small part of all deaths related to the 'Canary Route,' which has become one of the most dangerous, if not the most dangerous, in the world. These death figures relate only to corpses found on 'cayucos' or people who died shortly after landing. The statistics for the last three years are available. Regarding procedural activity, it is worth noting the number of investigations and proceedings. For each 'cayuco' that arrives, preliminary investigations are initiated. 282 were initiated in 2024 and 100 in 2025. He explained the outcome of these

initiated investigations. In the vast majority of cases – 97.12% – proceedings are provisionally suspended due to a lack of known perpetrator. Only 2.88% of the initiated investigations are pursued. He referred to the fact that either the immigrants have not collaborated, or there are insufficient resources to investigate who the operators of that ‘cayuco’ might be. He also specified that, in recent years, there has been an intensification of investigations, evidenced by the fact that they currently have 10 ongoing preliminary investigations with suspects in provisional detention. There are also 11 ongoing proceedings from 2024 and 2025. Regarding related crimes, in collaboration with, and under the direction of, the Delegate Fiscal for Foreigners in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the adoption of technological investigation measures is being promoted. Also noteworthy is an aspect that initially might have been thought to hinder investigations, but is contributing to securing numerous pieces of evidence: the temporary prohibition of destroying ‘cayucos.’ In collaboration with the judicial authority and various intervening instances, they are ensuring that, despite this temporary prohibition, destruction is authorized within an average of 17 days, which is crucial for gathering evidence. In conclusion, there has been a resurgence of immigration to the point where 50% of irregular immigration arriving in the Canary Islands now does so through the island of El Hierro, both in 2024 and to date in 2025. This places El Hierro as the critical point of the maritime migratory route to Europe. Regarding the judicial load, a very high percentage of cases are simply suspended due to a lack of known perpetrator. Reinforcement of investigation measures would likely be needed. He had also requested special support for the Instruction Section of the El Hierro Court, as it has only one person dedicated to processing this type of case. He also referred to various needs that should be strengthened, such as the existence of cameras at La Restinga port and the need for a place to preserve corpses. Problems have arisen because there was no way to accommodate these corpses when, unfortunately, there have been numerous deaths. He also requested a well-equipped autopsy room.

Teresa Gisbert, Public Prosecutor specializing in juvenile cases at the Supreme Court, and María Farnés Martínez, Superior Prosecutor of the Canary Islands informed about the situation of unaccompanied migrant minors arriving in the Canary Islands (Spain). The conversation focused on legal frameworks, practical challenges, and the need for a coordinated, child-centred approach.

Key Points:

Shift in responsibility: The Prosecutor for Minors now handles cases involving unaccompanied migrant children, moving responsibility from the Foreigners unit. This was done to prioritize these children's rights as children first, rather than solely as migrants.

Increased arrivals & strain on resources: 2023 saw a massive influx of migrants to the Canary Islands, particularly in Tenerife (11,284 in October alone). While numbers decreased in 2024, the system remains under significant pressure. Existing child protection centres were overwhelmed.

Age determination challenges: Identifying minors amongst arrivals is difficult. Initial assessments by police are often inaccurate, leading to some being misplaced in the wrong centre before their age is confirmed.

They informed that, among approximately 1.500 unaccompanied minors whose age was not clear and who were subjected to age-assessment procedures at their arrival to the adult

reception centres, around half of them were ultimately determined to be adults.

Legal complications with asylum & protection: Two rulings from the Supreme Court attempt to balance the Spanish government's responsibility for international asylum claims with the public entities' responsibility for child protection. The rulings emphasize collaboration but are difficult to implement.

Protocol for transfers to the mainland: A new protocol is being developed to ensure that before unaccompanied minors are transferred to the mainland (peninsular Spain), they are consulted, and their views are considered. This is vital, particularly for those who have established roots in the Canary Islands.

Concerns about centre standards: There are worries that some transferred minors may end up in facilities that aren't specifically designed for children, hindering oversight and the provision of appropriate care.

"MENA" terminology: The speakers strongly reject the use of the term "MENA" (a Spanish acronym for unaccompanied foreign minors), finding it dehumanizing and focusing on their foreign status rather than their vulnerability as children.

Delinquency & exploitation: While the speakers acknowledge some migrant minors may commit crimes, they emphasize that a larger number are victims of crimes like exploitation (sexual and labour).

They explained that there has been an increase in criminality following the arrival of unaccompanied minors, with offences committed mainly against them. The types of offences referred to included fights, insults, and sexual assaults, occurring mainly within reception centres. Furthermore, the prosecutor could not tell if criminality figures may increase once these individuals reach the age of 18 and leave the centres.

Need for solidarity & resources: The speakers stress the need for greater solidarity from other regions of Spain and increased resources to support the Canary Islands in providing care and integration services.

In essence, the discussion highlighted the complex legal and practical challenges of supporting unaccompanied migrant minors, advocating for a system that prioritizes their well-being, rights, and integration, and calls for greater cooperation and resources to address the situation effectively.

MEP interventions

The Head of Delegation, **MEP Rzońca** thanked the speakers for their thorough interventions giving the Members of the delegation food for thought for their report.

MEP Ruotolo focused his interest on the question of unaccompanied minors that he find particularly moving. He highlighted that they are not foreigners, they are minors above all. He also asked the magistrate and the prosecutors that, if according to the facts and figures they had, it could be stated that an increase in criminal case was related to migration. He referred to the meeting with the representatives from the neighbours' platform of La Isleta and the isolated case given by them.

In this context, the prosecutors clarified that the specific case mentioned earlier during the meeting with neighbourhood representatives in La Isleta was being addressed by the competent judicial authorities, underlining the importance of relying on verified facts and evidence rather than perceptions or media narratives.

MEP Ruotolo stated that he would like to concentrate on the figures and not on perceptions that could be biased. There might be general perceptions, also based on how media depict things. However, we need numbers and facts, not just perceptions. He emphasised the information provided by the Prosecutors, namely that a large number of crime cases are committed against the migrants and not by the migrants! He was aware of the fact that the issues related to migration should be mainly solved in the countries of origin.

MEP Kruis asked the reasons why, in proportionate terms, an immigrant had 1.55% more chances of being in prison as, in the Canary Islands, from the total population in prison, migrants represent 31% but they only account for 22% of the total population. He also requested information on the figures concerning crime related cases in the district of La Isleta, where the reception centre is because this was a concern he heard from the neighbours of La Isleta during the morning meeting.

MEP Crespo argued that the migration policy should be a responsible and coherent one, because the capacities of the public institutions are not unlimited and that they should try to de-politicise this issue in order to be effective. The main principle ruling this policy should be coordination among the different public administrations. Spain, that is part of Europe, is particularly vulnerable to migration because of its borders with Africa. She asked about if the international agreements with third countries, especially with Mauritania, and the reinforcement of Frontex to improve this situation. She also referred to the question of organize crime concerning migration and the possibility to establish legislation that would allow to end up with those groups. She also asked about the EU Regulation on return that it is a key tool to help solving this situation with migration.

MEP Gómez found this meeting very useful because the magistrate and prosecutors solved many doubts and questions that the delegation had. She asked about the solution given to question of the guardianship of unaccompanied minors with international protection that makes the regional government of Canarias responsible for tutoring these minors even when they are moved to the mainland. She asked if this solution was really in the best interest of the child when urgent decision might be needed (health treatments). She also talked about the need of solidarity between regions in Spain to take in charge unaccompanied minors, but this is confronted to the need to keep the bonds already created by the minors. She also thanked that figures were given concerning crime cases related to migration as a contrast to the subjective perception of some neighbours that linked the two issues. She suggested to talk about the crime cases that migrants suffer themselves (human trafficking, hate crimes, sexual and labour exploitation). She asked the magistrate about his statement related to the report sent to the delegation that argued that the action plan against illegal trafficking has created the opposite effect of reinforcing the operability of organized crime. She wanted also to clarify why the magistrate talked about an increase in arrivals in 2024 and 2025 while other public institutions are talking about an important decrease in the number of arrivals during the year 2025 because of the work done with the countries of origin or transit.

MEP Buxadé thanked the speakers for their work and professionalism, but he differed in many of the arguments presented. He always talked about MENA (Unaccompanied Foreign

Minor), without considering himself racist or xenophobic. He considered it a concept or expression that it is internationally accepted. He argued that the speakers have talked a lot about minors, but they represent only 5% of the arrivals. This is not a mission focused on minors, it is a visit to analyse the situation caused by massive illegal migrations (95%). He has not listened to any consideration related to adults that stay in the Canary Islands for periods up to 12/15 days and then are moved to the mainland and after 6 months they are out of the system. He stated that there was not a reply on criminal terms. He said that the foreign population in prisons is overrepresented in Spain and also in the Canary Islands. He was surprised by the statement that a minor, after three years of being under the responsibility of a public administration, reaches his adulthood without personal documents. He suggested to call their parents back home, because minors talk to their parents and relatives every day. He referred to the LIBE mission in May 2025 where they confirm in the San Andres centre for minors they spoke to their families every day. He also asked if they have considered that the best interest of the minor would be to return home with their parents. He also put a concrete hypothetical example of him having two children with a woman from Mali, first they live in Mali and then he takes those two children to Spain. The mother does not accept this situation. He asked what does the Prosecutors Office do in these cases. According to his knowledge, this is a case of international child abduction and the children should return with their mother to Mali. He took this example from his past experience as State Attorney. He asked if there is any work done with the countries of origin of those minors to return them with their parents. He also stated that only one case of a girl that has been kidnapped and raped is enough to hold a mission like this one and also that sexual assaults are very serious crimes committed by foreigners or nationals. He also referred to the cases of two centres of minors closed because of the irregular activities of an NGO where possible crimes against minors were perpetrated.

Mr Lorenzo replied to the different questions, concerning the issue of the action plan he was particularly referring to the Canary Islands route that increased the numbers of arrivals. Concerning figures of 2024, he was referring to an increase in the island of El Hierro. It was all a question of correct context. Concerning statistics, he was only based on judicial data so he could not answer Mr Kruis, as judicial data does not distinguish between nationals and non-nationals in terms of convictions. Other institutions (Minister of Interior) may have statistics connecting crime and irregular migration. Nowadays, the data refers to the effective rulings without differentiating by origin of the people condemned.

Ms Gisbert referred to the fact that she did not deal with issues related to adults as she is focused on minors. She agreed that facts and figures are missing. Statistics in the Prosecutors Office differentiates depending on the crimes but not on the origin of the author or the victim. They have just started to ask, concerning minors, to request that they differentiate if the victim is a boy or a girl and the date of birth. The Prosecutor specialised in foreigners could complement those figures. She considered that the Courts have not make a difference between adults and children requesting international protection. She thought that the Prosecutor's Office should be present from the beginning of the process concerning minors. Concerning the best interest of the minor, they have also considered returning them to their country of origin, if the children requested it or the family claimed them. She argued that parents believe that, for their children, coming to Europe is the only way to save them. This should be analysed case by case and not on a general basis with the intervention of the prosecutor. Concerning the concept of MENA, she refers to the public perception that links this concept to crimes or problematic situations. The problem of the lack of documents is also serious. She has not a clear view that differentiating between nationalities is ethically correct.

Ms Farnés referred to figures in the Canary Islands of migrant adults do not have a major effect because most of them are taken to the mainland in less than 15 days. That is the reason why she has referred particularly to minors that remain in the islands. She also made the difference between identification and documentation. The Prosecutor's Office has them identified but without the proper documents (residence and working permit). This is not an easy task because institutions have to take into account the particular legislation of the countries of origin. They have had meetings with diplomatic authorities, not based in the Canary Islands, of those third countries trying to solve this situation. For Senegal and Mauritania, they need the authorisation coming from the father and they need to look for the family. This procedure is quite complex. Concerning the particular case of the girl in La Isleta is being dealt by the competent judicial authorities. She also referred to the active action of the Prosecutor's Office in the closure of four centres of minors. Regarding the centres closed due to abuse committed by staff members, it was stated that four centres have been closed so far and that judicial proceedings are ongoing in this regard.

Meeting with national authorities

The second meeting took place with the Spanish national authorities, the Government Delegate in the Canary Islands, **Mr. Anselmo Pestana Padrón** welcomed the delegation to his premises and after a brief intervention suggested to hold directly a debate with the Members of the delegation to reply to their queries concerning the situation in the Canary Islands under his responsibility.

MEP interventions

MEP Sandro Ruotolo was interested particularly in the situation of unaccompanied minors in need of international protection as he has understood that this international protection is not compulsory. He also agreed with the President of the Superior Court when he referred to facts and not to feelings and connected his question to the reasons of the reduction in the arrival of migrants during 2025.

MEP Sebastian Kruis argued that he had experienced a big difference between the presentations given by official representatives and NGOs and what the people from the districts close to the reception centres and the news are saying about incidents concerning migrants. He was also interested in statistics about crime in relation with the origin of the suspects that he considered very useful also for the government. He did not believe that there were no numbers available.

MEP Sandra Gomez reminded the aim of the mission focused on the management in the reception centres and the capacity of these centres to handle the arrival of migrants. She talked about the good impression they had from the visit to the two reception centres. She also confronted the subjective view of the representative of the neighbours of La Isleta with that one of the two prosecutors who informed the delegation that under-aged migrants are often victims of crime themselves - being mistreated and abuse being perpetrated against them. She also mentioned the collaboration with Frontex and with third countries and the analysis of migration during 2025.

MEP Carmen Crespo mentioned her past as Government Delegate of the Andalusia and the good collaboration she had with all the police and national authorities in charge of migration. She supported that the migration policy should be responsible and not based on an open-door

policy in a society that does not have an unlimited capacity of integration. She defended that minors and migrants have an integration capacity to the Spanish society. Responsibility, control and coordination among the different public authorities is key to improve. She also was surprised by the fact that some judicial authorities did not know about the EU Migration and Asylum Pact and the actions taken by EU institutions in this field, particularly concerning the return policy. She highlighted the importance that the public institutions in the different countries should know about what it is done at EU level. She also referred to the lack of resources in the field of the tests to determine the age of minors and the need to have it included in the next MFF. She also referred to Frontex and the need to coordinate among institutions. She asked about the situation with third countries like Mauritania and the intervention of smugglers and mafias.

The Government Delegate reminded the visit of the Spanish Prime-Minister, various ministers and also the President of the European Commission to third countries to foster collaboration among public authorities. He talked about the bilateral agreements with several countries (Mauritania and Senegal) where they are members of the Spanish police forces that provide information as well as help to improve the situation concerning migration. He did not agree with the process of separating unaccompanied minors depending on whether they have asked for international protection or not. He also referred to the modification of Article 35 of the Immigration Law that allows regions as the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla to count on the shared responsibility of the rest of the Spanish regions to hold unaccompanied minors. He argued that 5.000 minors could not be a problem of integration among a population of 50 million people, neither because of the number nor because of the resources. He also referred to crime statistics and facts. The majority of the migration arriving to the Canary Islands comes from Latin America without any problem to integrate themselves. The number of crimes for 1.000 inhabitants in the Canary Islands (approx. 47/1000) is lower than the Spanish average (approx. 51/1000) counting on the global increased related to cyber criminality. He also explained the development from 2020 with only one CATE in Tenerife and 23.000 migrants arriving to the actual situation with CATEs in most of the islands. The reception centres were with a level of occupation of 27% at the time of the visit. No figures concerning the origin of the suspect, neither in the active nor in the passive form but he acknowledged there were cases but there was not a relation between migration and crime. He considered that Frontex should focus on third countries to reduce the exit of migrants coming from those countries. Clear reduction of arrivals that show a positive trend. Increasing resources and improving reception centres and legally solving the situation of unaccompanied minors (107 minors' dossiers active). He referred to the resources of the national authorities concerning boats, planes and helicopters and also receive help from the army. He also replied to the question by the Chair and Mr Kruis on the complaints received from the representatives of the neighbours of La Isleta and the reception centre, Mr Pestana acknowledged that there are certain types of public infrastructures that are not welcomed by neighbours who do not wish to live near migration centres, because of a subjective perception of insecurity by the citizens, however, he understood the complaints by neighbours. He could not provide figures that could imply a link between migration and crime.

Wednesday 17 September 2025 – Gran Canaria

Visit IES Villa de Firgas secondary school

On 17 September, the delegation headed towards the municipality of Firgas where they visit

IES Villa de Firgas secondary school. In this school they met Mr. **Hipólito Alejandro Suárez Nuez**, Regional Counsellor of Education of the Government of Canarias and the Director, teachers and students of the educational centre.

There was a presentation given by the director and teachers at IES Villa de Firgas regarding an intercultural project undertaken to support newly arrived students, many from African countries. The presentation focused on the challenges faced, the solutions implemented, and the overall impact on the school community. The Education Counsellor of the Canary Islands also speaks at the end.

Initial situation and challenges

Initially, the new students (children who are traumatised, grieving, feeling homesick, many lost their parents etc.) didn't have the required language support; there wasn't anyone to communicate with in their native languages. The project began due to the arrival of students from approximately seven different African countries, many speaking different dialects, sometimes not even understanding each other. The goal was to integrate 48 students (the current number), selected from an initial group of 300, for observation and feedback. The influx of students with diverse backgrounds and special educational needs presented a significant challenge and caused anxiety among the teaching staff. A survey was conducted among teachers and students to assess needs and feelings regarding the new situation. The results highlighted the urgent need to support the new students without neglecting the local students.

Key challenges identified:

How to support students who don't understand the language and prevent academic decline? How to address the diverse special needs of the students, including those with delayed entry into the education system, and navigate the bureaucratic process for accessing support? The students arrive with significant trauma and challenges from their past and present circumstances. Adapting to differing habits and behaviours between the students' home countries and the Canary Islands. Teachers had to address potential rejection and encourage understanding. A need to learn about the students' cultures, traditions, and religions. Incidents of conflict: An example given was a student making an insensitive comment after sports class, highlighting the need for immediate intervention and education. The school responded with readings on empathy and understanding.

Responses and solutions:

Collaborative approach: A group of teachers formed a committee to address the situation. They aimed to involve the entire school community (teachers, students, families). Initial actions: Survey, to understand the needs of all involved. Voluntary committee: Established to drive the project. External support: Sought assistance from organizations like the "Liga Canaria de la Educación y la Interculturalidad". Intercultural delegates: Students volunteered to support the new arrivals, assisting with academics, social integration, and activities. Activities: Games, workshops, and cultural exchanges were organized to promote understanding and integration. Intercultural welcome classroom: A safe space created for students to share their experiences, receive support, and process their trauma. Addressing bureaucracy: Efforts to streamline the process for accessing special educational support.

Specific incidents and student voices (Omar and Abdulai's Stories)

Mali situation: Students from Mali were asked to sign a document to relocate for protection due to ongoing conflicts and terrorism. This caused fear and confusion among the students, who questioned their safety if they didn't comply.

Conflicting advice: Students consulted their families, receiving mixed messages about signing the relocation document.

The "Patera" experience: Abdulai shared his harrowing journey in a small boat ("patera") with over 50 people, highlighting the dangers and hardships faced by migrants.

Challenges with permission: Restrictions on participation in activities and visiting family due to bureaucratic hurdles.

Importance of recognition: Students emphasized the need to be treated as individuals, not as objects or cases.

Academic support: Despite language barriers, some students excelled academically, demonstrating their resilience and potential.

Further initiatives and reflections

Traveling notebooks: Students exchanged writings and drawings with peers in the Sahrawi camps and Senegal, fostering cross-cultural understanding. Art and cultural exchange: Murals and artistic collaborations were used to celebrate diversity. Photography contest: Students showcased their identities and cultural backgrounds through photography. Radio and podcast: Students shared their stories and experiences. Conflict resolution: The committee intervened in conflicts, promoting dialogue and empathy. Teacher training: Sought training from external organizations to better support the students.

Concluding remarks

Voluntary effort: The project was driven by the dedication and passion of the teachers and staff.

Future goals: To continue expanding the project and share best practices with other schools. They requested to be taken into consideration by European programmes such as Erasmus +.

The Education Counsellor concluded by emphasizing the importance of solidarity, inclusivity, and providing support to migrant students. He criticized the lack of support from the central government and the lack of solidarity of other regions and highlighted the need for a more humane and just approach. He also acknowledged the emotional impact of the work and praised the dedication of the teachers and students.

MEP Interventions

The Head of Delegation, **MEP Rzońca** warmly thanked the opportunity to meet with teachers and students and to learn firsthand about their situation and needs. He also thanked the Regional Education Counsellor for his honest speech. He made an analogy with the situation

in Poland and the massive arrival of migrants fleeing the war in Ukraine and the need to support both adults and children bearing a harsh situation.

MEP Ruotolo said he had little to add to this moving moment and wanted to particularly thank the teachers for their solidarity and humanity in supporting and integrating migrant students. He wanted to know how this experience could be exported to other places as an example of good practice and integration.

MEP Kruis referred to his Colombian origin to show he shared some of the feelings students from other countries had. He wished the best of lucks to all the students and thanked the teachers for their work with them. Nevertheless, he also wanted to talk about the causes creating the problem of migration and his criticisms that was not because he did not care about people. He argued that he might differ in the solutions needed but that he also cared about these children. He stated that, because of the limitation of the system and resources, you cannot welcome everyone as you could not give them all the best care they would need. He was grateful to meet teachers and students today.

MEP Gómez stated that this visit was the one that made the difference during this mission. According to her, Members have witnessed the reality of people living in the Canary Islands. The daily life of these children is what the rest of people should be aware of. She argued that she did not like speeches that dehumanize people, talked only about numbers and treated migration as an abstract problem. We should understand that they are boys and girls with their own issues and their own families. She suggested to make politicians and the rest of the society aware of what they had lived today. She thanked and showed respect to the teachers for their incredible task as public servants changing the lives of people. Addressing the students, she told them that no one should take away their hopes and expectations and that Spain can give them the chance to reach all their goals, helping them and their families as a country of solidarity. She asked the teachers and the Education Counsellor what they would like to see in the report of the mission.

MEP Crespo stated that she had witnessed similar educational projects in Almeria with migrant students. She admired the will and determination of teachers that started a project from the beginning even without any previous experience or resources. She highlighted that this should not be forgotten, and the project should be coordinated with other projects in the rest of Spain and Europe. Sharing best practices is key to improve and develop these projects. This is an example of educational integration that should be made public. She also referred to the situation that the teachers had to bear from one day to the other with the arrival of an important number of migrant students. Even though the number of arrivals may not be controlled, the integration should be effective and prepare educational projects for the future with reasonable ratios of students. Europe could help with the question of language integration. She hoped that the students would have a fair life with possibilities to develop their abilities. The integration capacity of Spain and particularly of the Canary Islands is not unlimited. She supported a controlled migration policy related to regular migration, good for everyone and the most human approach.

The Director of the school suggested that there is a need of better coordination at EU Level, there are some unnecessary resources reaching the educational centres. The schools should be heard and understand. Sometimes there are getting too many digital blackboards, computers or notebooks that are not used. They need more teachers, more support concerning language courses and experts to deal with these children. Teachers should focus on teaching their

subjects while now they are working as tutors, psychologist without too much support. They have been trying for three years in a row to have the Erasmus accreditation without success because of bureaucratic reasons, not enough funds. They are in contact with other educational centres in Portugal and France but the lack of resources limited their actions.

Meeting with operative units at the Canarias Regional Coordination Centre (CCRC)

After a visit to their premises, the delegation was welcomed by the different operative units at the Canarias Regional Coordination Centre. The Director of the Centre, **Lieutenant Colonel Alvaro Fernández Rodríguez**, wanted to thank not only the visit of the delegation but also the representatives of all the institutions that collaborate so wonderfully with them. He pointed out that they had the difficult task of first trying to prevent people from dying at sea and, second, studying and analysing – and therefore attempting to control – migratory flows. He announced that they would provide a brief overview of how they coordinate this work from here, from this centre, before handing over to representatives from the different institutions to answer any questions, either regarding operational matters or the situation on the ground.

Overview presentation:

Commander Agustín Barroso gave an overview presentation, he had been working at the CCRC for 14 years now. He was born in Melilla, raised there, and his family still lives there, all of them. He has always experienced the issue of migration and continues to do so. It's often a difficult thing to understand. He explained why the centre was created and the reasoning behind it. The creation of this centre primarily stems from the arrivals in the Canary Islands, officially recorded as beginning in 1994. From '94 onwards, boats began arriving because of the proximity of the Canary Islands to the African continent. Normally, boats have always arrived as immigrants, but they were officially registered as such from 1994. This was linked to the economic improvement in Spain, which acted as a pull factor, culminating in 2006 with what we called the 'cayuco crisis'. This crisis was triggered by increased pressure in northern Africa, particularly in Ceuta and Melilla. As a result, certain coordination measures were taken with Morocco, and the border fence was reinforced. This led to a change of route. This was the first time the crisis in the Canary Islands was considered the first crisis of the European Union's external border. Because, from that concept – the concept of an external border of the European Union – not only national authorities were involved, but also European institutions.

They began recording the arrival of boats, initially the typical 'pateras' (small boats) and Moroccan fishing boats. But then Mauritanian boats started arriving, which are different. And Senegalese and Guinean boats, carrying hundreds of immigrants. Furthermore, the issue of drug trafficking led to the use of legal frameworks also for immigration management. Depending on the area and the person's nationality, one or the other approach is used.

Spain's initial response (2006)

During that 2006 crisis, Spain began taking measures at the Ministry of Interior level. It launched an operation called 'Alfa India' because they had to protect and accommodate migrants. So, certain reception centres were established, in this case, military ones. They also began using air and maritime surveillance, as nothing existed before. With the Guardia Civil

and police, they started reinforcing capabilities, including the ‘SIVE’ system (Integrated External Surveillance System). It’s essentially a home alarm system – it detects when someone arrives, but it doesn’t prevent it. It detects arrivals and helps prevent crashes against rocks or allows for interception and detention. It’s a security system. They also started using oceanic vessels. Spain began increasing its capabilities and involving regional and national authorities. The Red Cross also began assisting arrivals. Something new emerged: starting dialogue with countries of origin. Through Memorandums of Understanding, Spain decided to collaborate and strengthen relationships with these countries. While Spain always had a good relationship with Morocco, this expanded to other countries. This included increasing police deployment in third countries – a completely novel approach. As far as he knew no other European country has a permanent police deployment in a third country. Guardia Civil and National Police, began managing European projects to secure funding to provide these police forces with resources and training. This occurred at several levels, and the third level was the involvement of the European Union. During this crisis, Frontex was newly created in 2005 and the first Frontex operation was launched in the Canary Islands. In fact, it was the longest operation Frontex ever had. This Frontex operation provided support to Spanish surveillance and a joint operation was established.

Centre Coordination and national/European measures

The government decided to create an authority, a person to coordinate all of this, given the number of actors and activities involved. So, a General of the Guardia Civil was appointed, and a support centre was created – this centre. The CCRC supports coordination at all levels.”

CCRC functions and information sharing

“Several functions were assigned: coordinating arrivals, coordinating information, and, importantly, preventing departures. There are existing agreements in place. The CCRC, involves Spanish institutions at national and regional levels, European institutions, and African countries, along with deployments in Africa. A central point is the CCRC, which coordinates not only the operations but also the complexities of coordination with countries like Morocco which did not always support Spanish authorities in preventing the departure of vessels, and Western Sahara. The speed at which people arrive from Africa – 12 hours from departure to arrival – requires a completely different type of management, especially in terms of maritime rescue. From Senegal, they were seeing arrivals after 8 days. This year, departures are starting further south, from Guinea Conakry, resulting in journeys lasting up to 10 days to reach the Canary Islands, with all the associated difficulties and risk of shipwrecks.

Deployment in Africa and international cooperation

Deployments of support were started in Africa. Currently, they have almost 100 personnel permanently stationed there, including patrol boats, Guardia Civil helicopters, and National Police aircraft. They also conduct joint patrols. In Gambia, they have a team in the Senegal River, patrolling and, for the past four years, investigative teams, not just operational deployments, but also investigative support. They also have their Guardia Civil aircraft and an oceanic vessel, which are periodically deployed to reinforce efforts due to cost and limited resources. The Frontex deployment is integrated under the coordination of the CCRC. In fact, when he first came here, he was the Frontex coordinator, the point of contact between Frontex and the CCRC. Later, he joined the CCRC staff.

He also gave an example of coordination starting at the origin. An example of a real warning they receive from Gambia, GID (Gambian Intelligence Department). It's a well-functioning institution. They have personnel there – an officer and an investigative team. They receive a warning of a possible departure. How do they know? Because it takes effort to gather 300 people. Eventually, the information spreads. So, there's a warning from Gambia. What do they do? They share the information, alerting Senegal. They coordinate with the authorities in Senegal. If it's not located in Senegal, They alert Mauritania. Mauritania, due to time constraints, believes it may be underway and requests assistance. Often, they have limitations in capacity, so they provide support, particularly around Cabo Blanco, where most people pass through."

Spanish SAR Zone and Moroccan cooperation

This operation was coordinated through this centre. They gave an example of a real operation from 19 July 2025. The purpose of their work is to intercept and support before entering the SAR zone. He showed in a map the Spanish SAR zone, which is very complex. Once it passes Cabo Blanco, the Spanish SAR zone is vast and has a difficult coordination issue with the overlapping zone attributed to Morocco. It's a support zone where the responsibility for maritime rescue ultimately lies with the Spanish authorities. Morocco provides support when it wants to, when it's in its interest. When the boat goes beyond this zone, they arrive in the Canary Islands and they attempt to intercept the boat with maritime rescue resources, supported by the Guardia Civil, and if unsuccessful, with the SIVE system to prevent undetected landings."

Canary Islands specifics and interception process

The problem with the Canary Islands is that everything is concentrated in one point. It's not like it spreads out across the Peninsula, where the migratory pressure is diluted. When you concentrate everything in one point, you saturate the system. That's the problem with the Canary Islands. This year, the main country of origin has shifted to Mauritania. Mauritania has a problem with its border with Mali and Senegal. They started departing from Mauritania. Senegal controlled its own crisis and reduced the number of departures. This year, the point is that departures continue from Mauritania. A new route has opened up that never existed before – a small one, but departures have started from Conakry, further south. Frontex, in its risk analysis of 2019, stated that the Canary Islands route would never be a concern again, and they closed the operation. CCRC always said that routes aren't closed, they're controlled. When control is lost, they reopen. So, in 2020, COVID closed borders, and immigrants in Morocco had no options, so they tried to reach the Canary Islands. Because returns were impossible due to closed borders, and there were less resources following Frontex 2019 decision, this created a snowball effect, leading to the figures we saw in 2020. They thought measures would be intensified, but the crisis this year is unlike anything they have seen before. It's difficult to control. It was predicted that 2022 would ease, but instead, 2022 saw the highest historical arrivals in the Canary Islands due to a series of circumstances."

Current situation and effectiveness

This year, arrivals are down, but it's hard to say how it will evolve. In 2024, they saw saturation in El Hierro and Lanzarote, but also all those coming from the south of Morocco. In 2021, 78% of departures were from Morocco. In 2022, 93%. But in 2023, despite Morocco remaining a significant origin, Senegal emerged, due to a crisis in the country. They found

that 43% were from Senegal. Although fewer boats depart, each boat carries around 250 people, saturating the system. The profile of the migrants remains relatively stable over time most of the irregular immigrants reaching the Canary Island being men. This year, Mauritania is the main departure point. Negotiations with the European Union and monetary factors influence the situation. Morocco's influence is also significant. This year, they're seeing a 47% reduction in arrivals, due to reduced pressure and effective work at the origin. They have reached 12,000 arrivals, and prevented 11,000, giving them a 47% effectiveness rate at the origin. For Senegal, it's a 79% prevention rate. They count people preparing to embark, not those identified during controls. They are also calculating total migratory pressure – not just arrivals, but also those prevented. This is also reflected in the number of investigations and arrests of traffickers.

Intelligence and collaboration

Last year, there were 28 investigations, 24 arrests, and a total of 240 individuals involved in trafficking organizations. There's a lot of groundwork before reaching these results, as the journeys are long. They have statistics on how many people are lost along the way, which they also try to control. He showed an example of a cayuco that reached the Dominican Republic, completely depleted. He also showed the port of Nouadhibou, a fishing port. 3,000 cayucos depart daily, not for immigration, but for fishing. However, Mauritians have a control point that works very well. The success of this effort is that out of those 3,000 daily departures, only a few escape control.

Concluding Remarks

The Director of the CCRC added that the secret to controlling migratory flows lies in two key areas: intelligence gathering and working at the origin. They cannot control migratory flows at the destination; it's impossible. They can rescue people and prevent deaths at sea, which is also their responsibility. But if they want to control flows, they must generate intelligence and work in the countries of origin. There's no other way. He reiterated that they have representatives from the Guardia Civil, National Police, Salvamento Marítimo (Maritime Rescue), and the Red Cross ready to answer the questions from the delegation.

MEP interventions

MEP Ruotolo asked about the number of casualties they have witnessed or recovered during their rescue missions and the estimate the operative units might have.

MEP Gómez thanked the work of the operative units and the valuable information given. She has understood that the negotiations between the EU and third countries have an important influence in the migratory flows and she wants the speakers to develop this idea. She also wondered why Senegal was collaborating more than other countries such as Mauritania or Morocco. She insisted on knowing the figures concerning casualties and shipwrecks to reflect the dramatic situation.

The speakers stated that giving an estimate is very difficult because of the different areas and competences covered. Knowing that there are some NGOs that dare to give that estimate. There are not official figures, and they wanted to be prudent. Migration is a tool to negotiate with the EU.

MEP Crespo thanked for their incredible work and stated politics, and international agreements are linked to migration. She focused on the agreements with Senegal and Mauritania. She wanted to highlight that there is a lack of resources in the hands of the police forces that have to come from the central government and from the EU institutions. She also referred to the need of reinforcing the role of Frontex and the coordination with the first entry countries. More resources needed. She showed her concern about the SAR zone and the way Morocco was reacting. There is an example of joint patrols in the past that could be explored.

The representative from the Maritime Rescue Unit explained how countries coordinate themselves to deal with emergencies at sea. The SAR convention (Morocco is also part of it with a good coordination) deals with this issue. Spain has 1,5 million square kilometres of SAR zone with 1 million square kilometres around the Canary Islands making it complicated to react.

The Red Cross representative talked about the harsh situation they have suffered from 2019 onwards. At some point, in 2020 they had 2.700 people at the Arguineguin dock. Lack of human resources and logistically. In 2023, they started to arrive to El Hierro. Nowadays they have a contractual team of 79 persons.

The National Police representative, **José Antonio Ayuso**, referred to what they do with migrants when they arrive to the Canary Islands. He wanted to highlight the difference of management depending on the places of origin from where the boats leave (different types of boat, more or less migrants in each boat, health conditions at arrival and even the number of minors). Most of the boats come from Mauritania and the migrants are mainly from Mali and they request international protection. The research and investigation methods and collaboration differ from one country to the other. With reference to the province of Las Palmas, the closest to the African continent, from 2023 onwards there has been a decrease in the number of Moroccans from 44% to 22%. Malians were a mere 4% and now add up to 29,80%. In the Tenerife province there are less Moroccans and more nationals from Senegal and Mali. In Spain, the Atlantic route has reduced the numbers, but the Mediterranean route (Balearic Islands) has increased the number of arrivals (nationals from Argelia 28,63%). Minors represent 8% of the arrivals. He informed about the procedure they follow to check if minors are really minors. Those that are clearly minors are handed to the regional authorities but in case of doubt a longer procedure involving the Prosecutor's Office and other social institutions has to take place. Also there is a difference in treatment and procedure between unaccompanied (74%) or accompanied (26%) minors. In the case of family groups, they verify via DNA or other means the relationship with the minor. He also informed about the creation of the Centres of Temporary Attention of Foreigners (CATEs) with a maximum stay of 72 hours, exclusively for those who come from the sea. They also look into possible vulnerabilities. In the procedure of international protection, he differentiated between the number of manifestations of well over 4.600 in 2023, 5.600 in 2024 and 2.900 in 2025 and the formalizations of the request 65 in 2010, 2.934 in 2024 and 1.900 in 2025. 57% of the interviews relate to minors and 47% to women because the police forces concentrate their efforts in the most vulnerable groups. He stated that as soon as an immigrant applied for international protection, the return procedure under Spanish immigration law was automatically suspended. He also mentioned the important presence of the National Police in third countries, like in Mauritania for more than 20 years and in Senegal with Joint Investigation Teams which are very useful and with result. 71 detentions during 2024 responsible of introducing 1.865 migrants. In 2025, 41 detentions concentrating the investigations mainly where they were casualties involved.

MEP Kruis asked if the police forces had the capacity and the know how to do push backs.

MEP Buxadé if with more resources in the countries of origin the results were better. He also asked about the cooperation with France that is no longer present in Mali and lacks the intelligence resources they had in the past. Related to Maritime Rescue he asked about the possibility to sign international agreements with third countries to return the boats to their country of origin, even if they are detected in the Spanish SAR zone. He also referred to the claims made by the neighbours' representatives about the lack of police resources when there are mass arrivals in other parts of the Canary Islands and about the crime cases around the centre "Canarias 50". He affirmed that Moroccans cannot be expelled to Morocco because they do not accept them (just 8% of illegal immigrants who are nationals of Morocco are returned there).

The National Police representative replied that concerning the centre "Canarias 50", when the migratory flow affects small islands with less police resources, the National Police has to manage and distribute its specific intervention units. But this does not mean that the zone of the centre will lack resources because there are other units responsible of dealing with it. They know that the centre creates unrest among neighbours. He confirmed that, while returns to Morocco do take place, the number of expulsions is very limited. He explained that, as Morocco-nationals migrants arrive without documentation, expulsions cannot be carried out because Morocco does not process documentation for these migrants and because Morocco rejects a repatriation agreement with Spain.

Concerning the Maritime Rescue, they stated that they did not carry out interceptions of vessels, but were limited to search and rescue operations involving boats in distress, with the sole objective of safeguarding human life at sea. It was explained that, as the operations take place within an area of Spanish responsibility, Salvamento Marítimo contacted the relevant African countries to enquire about the availability of assets in the area; however, in many cases those countries did not have the necessary means. It was further indicated that commercial vessels frequently carried out rescue missions of migrant boats. Where such vessels are bound for Morocco, disembarkation takes place there, whereas when they are bound for Spain, as do the majority, disembarkation takes place in Spain. It was also stated that, in many cases, countries of origin did not accept the return of these migrants. Salvamento Marítimo further acknowledged that it did not always have the technical capacity to return rescued migrants to the African coast, either due to technical limitations or because the rescue vessel could not be taken out of his primary service, which results in migrants being brought to Spain even when their point of departure is well known.

Press Conference

The mission concluded with a press conference held in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, during which Mr Bogdan Rzonca summarised the key takeaways from the delegation's three-day visit and responded to questions from local, regional and national media. The Members of the delegation agreed a joint statement that has been published on the EP website and can be found here:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/fact-finding-visit-canary-islands-spain/product-details/20250721MIS03161>

Conclusions

The delegation noted the complexity and sensitivity of the issues addressed during the fact-finding visit. A forward-looking and comprehensive European migration policy, based on solidarity, respect of the law and protection of EU external borders is a key objective for the European Union. Migration policy is intended to establish a balanced approach to dealing with both regular and irregular migration.

The delegation took note of the positive contribution of regular migrant workers to the local economy, such as the hospitality industry, tourism or agriculture, in contrast to the pressing challenge of irregular migration.

The delegation acknowledged that all the parts agree on the need to establish a balanced and comprehensive approach to manage regular migration and deal with irregular immigration. Proper management of migration flows entails ensuring fair treatment of non-EU nationals residing legally in Member States, as well as enhancing measures to combat irregular immigration, including trafficking and smuggling, and promoting closer cooperation with non-member countries in all fields - the countries of origin as well as the transit countries.

The delegation took note that it was mentioned during the discussions that migration, including the irregular one, is a challenge for the whole European Union and not just a problem for individual Member States, which for many migrants serve as a first step to reach other countries in the EU.

The delegation concluded that the challenges ahead need the active participation of all the authorities concerned and that the goal of solving irregular migration needs to start in the countries of origin and continue with solidarity, determination and border enforcement in the countries of first entries.

Recommendations

The Committee on Petitions:

1. Underlines the need to increase search and rescue capacity as the Canary Islands route is notoriously dangerous; significant investment is needed in dedicated search and rescue operations, coordinated by Frontex and supported through strengthened EU-level involvement and solidarity, in close cooperation with national authorities and NGOs, including maritime and aerial assets;
2. Highlights the need to keep on improving reception conditions as reception centres in the Canary Islands are often overwhelmed and lack adequate resources; while having to ensure dignified living conditions (housing, food, healthcare – including psychological support), rapidly assess vulnerability and provide tailored assistance to women, children, and victims of trafficking, as well as legal aid from the moment of arrival to explain rights and options, medical support to migrants who often suffer from dehydration, exhaustion, and medical conditions including strengthen medical screening and access to healthcare, such as mental health services;
3. Suggests increasing development aid, including focusing aid on countries of origin and transit to address the economic, social, and political factors driving migration, in

partnership with local communities and civil society organizations;

4. Underlines the importance of tackling smuggling networks by strengthening international cooperation to dismantle human smuggling networks, inter alia through intelligence sharing, law enforcement collaboration, and prosecution of traffickers;
5. Recognizes the need to reinforce the Migration and Asylum Pact aims to address many of these issues, but its effectiveness relies on full implementation and genuine solidarity;
6. Underlines the importance of strengthening the external dimension of migration policy which is critical to ensure that agreements with third countries respect human rights and international law and are not simply aimed at outsourcing responsibility;
7. Recognizes the need to establish an independent monitoring mechanism to assess the implementation of the Pact and other EU migration legislation, including access to reception centres and the ability to interview migrants and asylum seekers.
8. Outlines the call to hold Member States accountable for failing to fulfil their obligations under EU law; calls on the European Commission to actively investigate and address breaches of EU law;
9. Outlines the importance of ensuring meaningful engagement with civil society organizations in the development and implementation of migration policy through valuable insights and expertise;
10. Recognizes the need to improve data collection and analysis on migration flows, asylum applications, and integration outcomes, thus helping to inform policy-making and identify emerging challenges;

These recommendations are complex and require a multi-faceted approach. The situation in the Canary Islands is a symptom of broader challenges within the EU's migration system. Addressing these challenges requires political will, solidarity, and a commitment to upholding human rights.