
Lithuania: increasing inflow of migrants through the border with Belarus. NGOs in place, the EU sending aids

Over the last few months and weeks, Lithuania has witnessed a growing inflow of migrants and asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa who get into Lithuania through the border with Belarus. According to the figures of Red Cross Lithuania, about 600 migrants illegally crossed the border between Lithuania and Belarus in the first six months of the year; about 400 arrived in June, over 80 of them children. Also according to the figures of Red Cross Lithuania, 40% of them are vulnerable people: women with children, pregnant women, unaccompanied children, disabled people. In order to respond to the emergency, in early July some Non-Governmental Organisations, including Caritas, The Order of Malta and the Scouts, joined forces to “make sure the reception and the worsening situation are managed according to humanitarian principles and the migrant’s basic needs are coped with”, a joint release from the NGOs states. Today, instead, following Lithuania’s call for help, the European Commission set in motion the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to send aids to the Baltic country. Twelve EU member states have already offered materials. “The Lithuanian border is an external border of the EU”, Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management, pointed out. Actually, other European agencies responded to the call too, such as the European Asylum Support Office and Frontex, which is deploying staff and equipment to protect Europe’s external border as well as collecting information with Europol about the criminal networks involved.

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