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Press Release, 16/02/2016, : EU citizens want a fair distribution of refugees

European governments are split when it comes to the migrant crisis. Some want to accept asylum seekers; others are refusing to take them point-blank. European citizens see this issue very differently. They want a fair distribution and above all demand a common response to this new challenge.

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Isabell Hoffmann

Gütersloh/Brussels, February 16, 2016. A large majority of European Union citizens wants a European response to the refugee crisis and is in favor of fairly distributing the burden amongst all member states. They strongly reject the idea of individual countries acting unilaterally. This is the opinion revealed in the latest survey undertaken by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, which regularly analyzes the opinions of European citizens on current political issues.The second edition of the eupinions survey sought the opinions of respondents in all EU member states on asylum and migration policies. The results show that 87 percent of respondents in all 28 EU member states are in favor of the EU external borders being jointly secured. 79 percent want a fair distribution of asylum seekers across all countries of the EU, and 79 percent also want to see freedom to travel within the EU safeguarded. A large majority (69 percent) also supports the demand that those states which refuse to accept their share of the responsibility should receive less money from EU coffers.

"This shows that on refugee policy a clear majority of Europeans are sending an unambiguous message to the EU summit: find a European solution based on solidarity, which creates stability and protects freedom of movement", said Aart De Geus, Chairman and CEO of the Bertelsmann Stiftung. "The European heads of state and government should take on board the fact that their citizens are clearly calling for a European solution."

According to the survey, 79 percent of all Europeans are in favor of a common European asylum and migration policy. 52 percent of those questioned say that the EU should assume primary responsibility for this. By contrast, 27 percent support shared responsibility between the EU and member states and only 22 percent are in favor of migration policy simply being left to their own country.

At the same time, the Bertelsmann Stiftung survey shows a gulf between the old and the new member states. While a majority of citizens (54 percent) in the new member states think that the burden of asylum seekers should be fairly distributed, in the old member states the figure is 85 percent. Only 41 percent of citizens in the new member states demand that those states which refuse to accept their fair share of asylum seekers should be subject to financial penalties, whereas in the old member states 77 percent are in favor of such a measure. All are in agreement that EU external borders should be secured jointly (91 percent in the old and 87 percent in the new member states are in favor).

The results of the study indicate that support for a common European policy for asylum and migration is very high. However, it should not be inferred that Europeans have an equally positive view towards recent arrivals. On this issue, as the eupinions survey shows, they are divided: 50 percent state that they sometimes feel like foreigners in their own country and 58 percent are afraid of negative consequences for social welfare systems. 54 percent of EU citizens think that the criteria for asylum seekers should not be interpreted too generously.

The survey suggests that people do not wish freedom of movement in the Schengen area to become a casualty of the current crisis: 79 percent of Europeans want to be able to continue to enjoy their freedom to travel and consider Schengen as the European Union's second most important achievement, just behind the internal market. Finally, a clear majority of respondents believe that Europeans will have to deepen their cooperation in the future, with 60 percent convinced of the need for more political and economic integration.

About the study:

The survey took place in December 2015 in all European member states (EU 28). With a sample of 11,410 respondents, it is representative for the European Union as a whole. At the same time, it is also representative for the six largest member states (Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and Poland). This survey is the second in a series undertaken by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in cooperation with Dalia Research. They are published under the name "eupinions" and evaluate the will amongst Europeans for continued development of the European Union and in various areas of policy. The first survey from October 2015 can be found **here**.

Links

- Survey "Border Protection and Freedom of Movement"

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