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Germany expected to demand Britain take greater share of migrants

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Germany is expected to demand Britain and other EU countries take a larger share of asylum-seekers as Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande hold talks over the migrant crisis in Berlin on Monday.

The two leaders are set to call for a common EU policy on migrants and an overhaul of the existing system.

France and Germany are pushing for new EU-wide talks on what has been described as the worst migrant crisis since the Second World War.

A record 107,000 migrants crossed the EU's borders last month, according to Frontex, the EU border agency.



A migrant jumps off a small dinghy after arriving on the shores of the Greek island of Kos

Photo: LOUISA GOULIAMAKI/AFP/Getty Images

In Italy, a record 4,400 migrants were rescued from the Mediterranean in a single day on Saturday, while in Greece 20,800 arrived last week alone.

Mrs Merkel and Mr Hollande are expected to push for a common EU list of “safe countries”, whose nationals will be refused asylum.

They want to reduce the numbers of “economic migrants” from the Balkans who have little chance of being granted asylum and are clogging the system as genuine refugees arrive from countries such as Syria.

They are also expected to demand the EU moves faster to set up reception centres of Italy and Greece, which bear the brunt of new arrivals and have been struggling to cope with the numbers.

Germany is also expected to renew its demands for other EU members including the UK to take more migrants.

“Of course Britain has a special role - it is not part of Schengen,” Thomas de Maiziere, the German interior minister, told the BBC last week.

“But all EU countries must become more aware of their responsibilities.”

A migrant climbs the security fence at the Eurotunnel terminal in Coquelles near Calais Photo: AFP

Germany currently takes by far the most migrants of any EU member state, and expects to host 800,000 this year.

But Mrs Merkel's government has been calling for some time for other EU countries to take a larger share.

Sigmar Gabriel, Mrs Merkel's vice-chancellor, on Sunday described the migrant crisis as Germany's "biggest challenge since reunification" in 1990.

Jean Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, dismissed calls for a new EU summit on immigration.

Member states should stop dragging their heels and implement existing agreements, he said.

His comments came in an opinion piece published in France's Le Figaro and Germany's Welt on Monday hours ahead of the talks in Berlin.

"We don't need a new summit. Member states have to adopt the European measures and apply them to their territory," Mr Juncker wrote.

Mrs Merkel has previously said the EU's existing rules on distributing asylum-seekers need to be changed.

Under the current rules, migrants are supposed to apply for asylum in the first member state they enter.

Most arrive in Italy and Greece, which are overwhelmed with the numbers.

Germany has long charged they encourage them to move on to other countries, against the rules.

In Italy, rescuers were responding to new distress signals on Monday after they saved a record 4,400 migrants were rescued from the Mediterranean in a single day on Saturday.

Italy's Coast Guard coordinated 22 different rescue operations off the coast of Libya.

Around 440 migrants in four flimsy rubber dinghies were rescued by the Royal Navy ship HMS Enterprise, in service in the Mediterranean as part of an EU mission to combat human trafficking.

The rescued migrants were transferred to a German frigate before being transported to Italy. Irish and Norwegian Navy ships also participated in the Italian rescues, and were helping transfer the thousands of migrants to ports in Sicily, Sardinia and Calabria.

In Palermo alone, authorities were bracing for the arrival of 130 children and minors traveling without adults, while in the port of Augusta, 90 people were quarantined for suspected cases of scabies.

Roberto Maroni, president of the region of Lombardy, on Sunday called for UN intervention, suggesting refugee camps be set up in northern Africa to prevent migrants trying to cross the

Meditaerranean.

In the Balkans, migrant tensions were shifting from in Macedonia toward Serbia and Hungary after Macedonian police began allowing asylum-seekers through the country.

A new reception centre hastily erected near Presevo was quickly overwhelmed by thousands of refugees, according to reports.

In interviews with Italy's La Stampa, Iraqi migrants described plans to follow a land route through the Balkans and Baltic states in order to reach Finland.

Hungary is builing a 108 mile razor-wire fence along its border to prevent migrants from entering.

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