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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL**

**Fifth report on relocation and resettlement**

# 1 Introduction

*The Fifth Report on Relocation and Resettlement provides an updated state of play since the last report of 15 June<sup>1</sup> and assesses the actions undertaken by all relevant stakeholders from 14 June 2016 until 11 July (the reporting period) to deliver on the recommendations made to accelerate the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes.*

*In light of the urgent need to provide support to both Greece and Italy, the European Council<sup>2</sup> reiterated its call for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes at its last meeting on 28 June 2016.*

*Since 11 June 2016, 1,694 people<sup>3</sup> have arrived in Greece. This number seems to reconfirm the continued trend of reduced arrivals due to the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement. The number of migrants present in Greece remained stable at around 57,000 migrants, around 8,500 on the islands and around 48,500 persons on mainland Greece<sup>4</sup>. According to recent estimates by the Greek authorities, around 34,000 migrants on mainland Greece belong to nationalities eligible for relocation.*

*In Italy, 24,977 people<sup>5</sup> have arrived since 11 June following an increasing trend similar to the same period in 2015. Arrivals of Eritreans, one of the nationalities eligible for relocation, also remained high (Eritrea is the second highest nationality among arrivals to Italy with more than 2,000 arrivals in the reporting period). Based on information from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 4,650 Eritreans are currently in Italy awaiting relocation.*

*During the reporting period, the overall rate of relocation continued at a similar level as during the previous reporting period. 776 additional persons have been relocated, bringing the total number of persons relocated so far to 3,056 (2,213 from Greece and 843 from Italy). The overall progress on relocation represents a positive trend that has to be continued, but more efforts are needed.*

*As regards resettlement, 8,268 people have been resettled so far of the agreed 22,504 under the July 2015 scheme, including 996 since the last report, mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. With the agreed actions set out in the EU-Turkey Statement only starting to be applied from 4 April,<sup>6</sup> 802 persons have been resettled from Turkey to the EU under the 1:1 mechanism, including 291 since the last report.*

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2016) 416 final.

<sup>2</sup> European Council Conclusions of 7 March 2016. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/07-eu-turkey-meeting-statement>; European Council Conclusions of 28 June 2016. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/28-euco-conclusions/>

<sup>3</sup> Irregular arrivals from 11 June until 10 July- Source Frontex, as reported by Greece in the frame of the Western Balkans daily report.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Greece authorities and UNHCR.

<sup>5</sup> The number of irregular arrivals in Italy through sea borders from 11 June until 10 July as reported in JORA (Joint Operations Reporting Applications) and collected in the frame of the Joint Operation Triton 2016. Data may be subject to changes after validation.

<sup>6</sup> SN 38/16, 18.03.2016.

## **2 Relocation**

### **2.1 Main highlights during the reporting period**

While relocation transfers from Greece increased during the reporting period (710 persons relocated compared to 594 during the previous reporting period), those from Italy decreased and remained particularly unsatisfactory (only 66 people relocated in the reporting period, compared to 186 in the previous reporting period).

The increase in the pace of relocations from Greece is the result of many factors including the engagement of several Member States of relocation, the increase in the capacity of the Greek Asylum Service to process relocation requests, the growing readiness of asylum seekers to participate in the programme and the work done by the Commission in cooperation with the Greek Asylum Service, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to make the relocation workflow in Greece smoother and more efficient. A stepping up in the provision of Member States experts will be needed to continue this positive trend.

As for Italy, the very low rate of relocations can be attributed to a number of factors. These include a less settled relocation procedure in Italy, with a relocation workflow still in the process of being developed and insufficiently close cooperation between the Italian authorities and Member States of relocation (particularly regarding security issues). Italy should also accelerate the opening of the additional hotspots already announced, as well as the setting up of mobile hotspots. Moreover, there is a need for clear information on the number of arrivals, persons registered, and potential candidates eligible for relocation present in Italy. In addition, the applicants eligible for relocation from Italy have generally more complex profiles, requiring extra administrative efforts from both the Member States of relocation and the Italian authorities, e.g. in terms of providing sufficient interpretation. Stepping up relocations from Italy requires more trust between the authorities, rapidly finalising and swiftly implementing the relocation workflow, further developing the administrative capacity of the Italian authorities, and ensuring sufficient pledges and flexible implementation of the existing arrangements. Member States also need to respond to calls for experts to be deployed in Italy.

The extremely low pace of relocation of unaccompanied minors is a major concern. Only 6 unaccompanied minors have been relocated during the reporting period. Finland remains the only Member State actively engaged in the relocation of this category of vulnerable applicants, while according to the Council Decisions on relocation, they should be given priority. Meanwhile, the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy continues to increase (almost 9,800 arrivals since the beginning of January of which 1,430 Eritreans) and in Greece after the mass pre-registration an estimate of 2,000 unaccompanied minors could be identified. Member States should urgently step up their efforts by making available places for unaccompanied minors as part of their formal pledges.

Relocation applies to nationalities with an EU-average recognition rate for international protection of 75% or more.<sup>7</sup> This information is based on Eurostat data and updated on a quarterly basis on the basis of Eurostat reports. The latest quarterly report was published during the reporting period. A significant development is the fact that following the latest

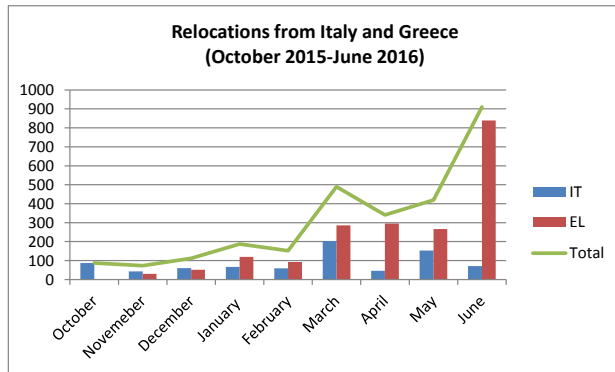
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<sup>7</sup> Article 3(2) of the Council Decisions on Relocation. For more information, see the First Relocation and Resettlement Report – COM(2016) 165 final.

quarterly report from Eurostat, Iraqis are no longer eligible for relocation.<sup>8</sup> However, in line with the Council Decisions on relocation, this does not affect those migrants already identified as persons in possible need for international protection.

## 2.2 Actions by the Member States of relocation

From 14 June until 11 July, 776 additional persons were relocated, 710 from Greece (to



Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Spain)<sup>9</sup> and 66 from Italy (to Cyprus, Croatia (its first relocations), the Netherlands and Portugal).<sup>10</sup> On 15 June, France relocated 126 people from Greece and on 7 July another group of 124 applicants were relocated, demonstrating again that it is possible to relocate large numbers in single transfers. In addition,

Finland, France, the Netherlands and Portugal continued with regular monthly transfers. An additional 133 relocation transfers are planned until the end of July from Greece<sup>11</sup> and 119 from Italy.<sup>12</sup>

**Actions to address the limited number of pledges:** 10 Member States (Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovenia)<sup>13</sup> and Switzerland<sup>14</sup> have submitted 858<sup>15</sup> new indications of readiness to relocate swiftly applicants for international protection (the "formal pledges"), which is less than the previous reporting period. The number of new formal pledges was more evenly distributed than in the previous reporting period: with 380 formal pledges submitted for Italy and 478 for Greece. The total number of formal pledges by Member States of relocation amounts to 9,119 (2,428<sup>16</sup> to Italy and 6,691 to Greece).

<sup>8</sup> The nationalities eligible for relocation are: Central African Republic, Eritrea, Seychelles, Dominica, Bahrain, Laos, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The nationalities, which met the 75% eligibility threshold according to the Eurostat data from quarter 1 of 2016 and do not meet this threshold anymore are Burundi, British Overseas Countries and Territories, Costa Rica, Iraq, Maldives and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

<sup>9</sup> 70 to Belgium, 2 to Bulgaria, 29 to Cyprus, 8 to Estonia, 68 to Finland, 256 to France, 28 to Ireland, 18 to Latvia, 28 to Lithuania, 42 to the Netherlands, 65 to Portugal, 33 to Romania and 63 to Spain.

<sup>10</sup> 4 to Cyprus, 4 to Croatia, 50 to the Netherlands and 8 to Portugal.

<sup>11</sup> 24 to Finland, 104 to the Netherlands, and 5 to Portugal.

<sup>12</sup> 50 to France, 15 to Latvia, 22 to Portugal and 32 to Spain.

<sup>13</sup> Estonia 15 for Greece, Finland 100 for Italy, France 50 for Italy, Germany 100 for Greece, Ireland 50 for Greece, Lithuania 80 for Greece, the Netherlands 50 for Italy and 100 for Greece, Romania 70 for Italy and 130 for Greece and Slovenia 10 for Italy.

<sup>14</sup> 100 for Italy.

<sup>15</sup> Note that 400 people were pledged by France for Greece in the previous reporting period but the confirmation was only obtained during this reporting period.

<sup>16</sup> Note that in the previous reporting period a formal pledge made by Romania had not been taken into account.

Austria<sup>17</sup> and Hungary have still not submitted any pledge. In addition, Poland continues to apply a *de facto* suspension of the relocation procedure.<sup>18</sup> Finally, most Member States are, thus far, not submitting pledges on a scale consistent with their allocations for the entire period covered by the Decisions (e.g. Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia have only pledged 1-2% of their respective allocations).

**Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests:** Though more Member States are now actively engaging with relocation from Greece, some Member States (Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland) are making efforts to accelerate the response time to relocation requests.

During the reporting period, a number of Member States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) have rejected relocation requests without providing substantiated reasons or on grounds other than those specified in the Council Decisions on relocation.

**Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants, including unaccompanied minors:** 3,169 unaccompanied minors arrived in Italy between 1 and 30 June, including approximately 500 Eritreans and very few Iraqis. In Greece, although it is not possible to know the number of arrivals of unaccompanied minors during the same period, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) reports that 2,390 unaccompanied minors have been referred to EKKA for accommodation since the beginning of 2016, including 531 are accommodated in dedicated facilities and 911 are waiting to be accommodated. According to the pre-registration exercise figures, 906 unaccompanied minors were recorded as of 7 July.<sup>19</sup>

The pace of relocation of unaccompanied minors remains extremely slow. Since 14 June, only six unaccompanied minors have been relocated from Greece (five to Finland and one to Ireland) bringing the total number of unaccompanied minors relocated to 29. Only a few Member States are willing to accept relocation transfers of unaccompanied minors, and the places offered continue to be insufficient to relocate all the unaccompanied minors who are eligible.

**Actions to reinforce EASO's capacity to support Italy and Greece:** EASO's most recent call for experts for Italy, published on 28 May 2016, requested 35 additional experts. As of 11 July, 40 offers<sup>20</sup> have been received. The total number of experts deployed in Italy is 32 asylum experts and 35 cultural mediators,<sup>21</sup> which is still insufficient to cope with the increasing number of arrivals and falls short of the number of experts needed under the

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<sup>17</sup> Austria benefits from a temporary suspension of the relocation of up to 30% of applicants allocated to Austria under Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601. As a consequence Austria has a one year suspension relating to the relocation of 1,065 persons. However, the normal legal obligations apply to Austria in respect of the relocation of the remaining allocation, so pledges and relocations are nevertheless expected.

<sup>18</sup> In early April, Poland suspended the processing of 73 relocation requests that the Greek Asylum Service sent to Poland on the basis of a pledge that Poland submitted on 16 December 2015 thus *de facto* freezing the relocation procedure three and a half months after the submission of the pledge. The same applies to requests from Italy.

<sup>19</sup> It is likely that the reduction in numbers is caused by minors who exited Greece through the Western Balkans route earlier in 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Austria, Switzerland, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Romania, Germany, Latvia, Spain, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Malta.

<sup>21</sup> The term of deployment of several experts ended during the reporting period.

contingency planning agreed by EASO with the Italian authorities (74 experts). Therefore, more and longer-term nominations are urgently needed.

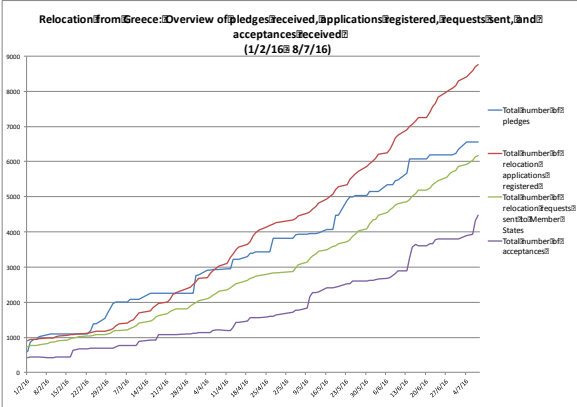
Regarding Greece, EASO sent a reminder to Member States concerning the last call for experts<sup>22</sup> to support the relocation scheme in Greece, since there is a continuous need to deploy new experts as their deployments come to an end. So far, EASO has received no new offers after this reminder. The total number of experts deployed in Greece as of 11 July is 27 asylum experts and 24 interpreters, which is insufficient to cope with the increased number of cases to be lodged once the mass pre-registration exercise is completed. For this reason, following the reassessment of the needs by the Greek authorities after the pre-registration exercise, EASO will consider requesting additional experts and cultural mediators.

### 2.3 Actions by Greece and Italy, including highlights from the roadmaps

- *Greece*

**Actions to accelerate the registration and processing of migrants:** As reported in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report on Relocation and Resettlement, the Greek Asylum Service (in close cooperation with UNHCR and EASO) launched a mass pre-registration exercise on 8 June, targeting around 49,000 people currently residing in mainland temporary accommodation sites.<sup>23</sup> As of 11 July, 21,223 people have been pre-registered.

**Actions to improve the registration capacity of the Greek Asylum Service:** The mixed Asylum Service/EASO registration teams consist of 6 experts in Athens, 3 experts in Thessaloniki and 3 experts in Alexandroupoli. As indicated in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report, part of the staff of the Greek Asylum Service is supporting the mass pre-registration exercise. Therefore, the capacity of the Asylum Service to process has not been further increased but a significant increase in the processing capacity is expected at the end of the pre-registration exercise. On average, the Greek Asylum Service, with the support of EASO, is lodging on a daily basis 110 applicants eligible for relocation.



The number of registrations has been matched by a similar increase in the number of pledges and the gap between the number of relocation requests submitted by Greece and the acceptance by Member States of relocation has decreased during the reporting period: Greece sent a total of 1,268 relocation requests while 1,224 new acceptances were received by the Member States of relocation. However, the gap remains important and could become a significant bottleneck in the follow-up to the mass pre-registration exercise.

<sup>22</sup> EASO's fifth call for experts to support relocation in Greece was launched on 21 April and was first reported in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Report on Relocation and Resettlement. A reminder was sent out on 24 June.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.easo.europa.eu/news-events/joint-press-release-pre-registration-asylum-seekers-greek-mainland-starting-today>.

**Actions to improve the coordination and to speed up the response time to relocation requests:** On 8 July, the Relocation Protocol was endorsed at the Liaison Officers meeting.

**Actions to improve the reception capacity in Greece:** As of 8 July, the total reception capacity in Greece stands at over 50,000 places<sup>24</sup> in temporary facilities and permanent reception places both for irregular migrants and persons in possible need of international protection who have expressed their will to apply for asylum or have already lodged their asylum applications. However, these facilities need to be substantially improved to meet appropriate standards.<sup>25</sup> Out of the 20,000 places committed for applicants eligible for relocation under the rental scheme by the UNHCR in December 2015, as of 4 July, 7,652 places were available, including 2,349 places in hotels/entire buildings, 3,738 places in apartments, 212 places in host families, and 201 places in dedicated facilities for unaccompanied minors.

As regard the relocation centres, as of 11 July, only one of the three relocation centres committed by the Greek authorities (Lagadikia) has been established. As of 8 July, 861 persons were accommodated in the centre. For the remaining two, the Greek authorities have not yet designated suitable sites. Discussions are still ongoing between the UNHCR<sup>26</sup> and the Greek authorities regarding the provision of more sites for the construction of dedicated relocation centres, notably in the Attica region.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report, these sites should be designated urgently to avoid bottlenecks in the relocation workflow following the mass pre-registration exercise.

- *Italy*

**Actions to increase the number of and make the hotspots fully operational:** The peaks in the last months in the number of arrivals have demonstrated that the current capacity of 1,600 places in the four operational hotspots (Pozzallo, Lampedusa, Trapani and Taranto) is not sufficient. In addition, the majority of disembarkations continue to take place outside the hotspots areas. As indicated in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report, Italy should accelerate the opening of the additional hotspots already announced, as well as the setting up of mobile hotspots (with the support of EU agencies). In addition, given the increasing rate of unaccompanied minors disembarking in Italy, dedicated areas as well as dedicated assistance should be in place in all hotspots.

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<sup>24</sup> This figure does not include the places provided under the UNHCR rental scheme capacity [http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country\[\]=83](http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country[]=83)

These temporary emergency and permanent facilities are established on the Aegean islands in the hotspots as well as on the mainland. As of 11 July 2016, there are currently only 1,138 permanent accommodation places that exclusively host applicants for international protection and unaccompanied minors.

<sup>25</sup> Commission Recommendation addressed to the Hellenic Republic on the specific urgent measures to be taken by Greece in view of the resumption of transfers under Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013, C(2016) 3805.

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR agreed to make 6,000 places from the rental scheme available to relocation centres to accommodate all fully registered relocation applicants. A Delegation Agreement reached with UNHCR for the 20,000 places rental scheme primarily benefits asylum seekers eligible for relocation, but can also benefit other applicants for family reunification in another EU Member State and persons seeking asylum in Greece, particularly vulnerable applicants. The 6,000 places to be made available for relocation centres are expected to become the main accommodation for relocation beneficiaries.

<sup>27</sup> The relocation centres are to be funded by the EU as part of the delegation agreement with UNHCR for the accommodation rental scheme.

**Actions to improve coordination:** After adoption of the Standard Operating Procedures on Italian hotspots<sup>28</sup>, several training sessions on these procedures have been delivered to relevant stakeholders in Trapani (27 June), Lampedusa (28 June) and Taranto (5 July). These were organised by the Italian Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Commission, Frontex, Europol, EASO, UNHCR and IOM. A further session is scheduled in Pozzallo on 12 July 2016. The group which drafted the SOPs will continue to meet regularly and monitor the correct implementation of the provisions in day-to-day operations.

The Commission is supporting the Italian authorities in the development of a relocation workflow. A first draft of the relocation workflow has been prepared and is under discussion with the relevant stakeholders for endorsement that should be completed very rapidly. The Commission will also organise a meeting of the National Contact Points and the Italian authorities in order to improve coordination between the relevant actors, as well as to assess and address swiftly the bottlenecks identified.

The Commission also notes that there is a need for clear information on the number of arrivals, persons registered, and potential candidates eligible for relocation present in Italy. The Commission is working with the Italian authorities and EASO to establish clearer procedures regarding improved information on these points.

**Actions to improve processing capacities in Italy:** As reported in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report, the capacity of the Italian authorities to register and process applications needs to increase. This should also contribute to reducing the risks of absconding, as applicants' requests will be processed more speedily. The teams registering applications need to be strengthened and EASO presence in the new registration hubs needs to be ensured.

**Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests:** Italy has continued to apply a very strict policy of not allowing additional security interviews by the Member State of relocation. As a consequence, some Member States are still not relocating any applicant from Italy. This has a significant impact on the number of relocation transfers from Italy, which remains exceptionally low. As mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report, solutions need to be found to allow these security interviews to happen, in particular given the more complex profiles of the applicants. The recommendations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Report remain valid as a way of building trust and reduce the requests of additional interviews by Member States of relocation.<sup>29</sup>

**Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants and unaccompanied minors:** No unaccompanied minor has been relocated yet from Italy. This should become a key priority as there are almost 1,500 unaccompanied minors potentially eligible for relocation (the great majority, 1,430 are from Eritrea). The lack of a specific procedure to facilitate the relocation of unaccompanied minors for Italy indirectly encourages them to move toward their desired destination autonomously, thus exposing them to smugglers and to the risk of becoming a victim of trafficking. It is essential to swiftly put in

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<sup>28</sup> The text is publicly available at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/hotspot>.

<sup>29</sup> These recommendations are the possibility to involve EASO experts in carrying out more extensive interviews, improving the quality of the applicant file by including a security form listing the various checks the person has undergone at each step of the procedure and the result of these checks, a security correspondent on the Italian side, and bilateral cooperation agreements to compare and exchange fingerprint data for security and criminal purposes.



place the pilot relocation of unaccompanied minors in order to develop a specific relocation procedure for Italy.

## 2.4 Actions by the Commission and EU agencies

- *European Commission*

The Commission has continued supporting Italy and Greece on the ground.<sup>30</sup> The Commission also dedicated a session of the twelfth meeting of the informal expert group on the rights of the child to the relocation of unaccompanied minors to raise awareness and share positive experiences (mainly from Finland) on this complex matter. As part of its monitoring of the implementation of the Council Decisions on relocation, the Commission raised and will continue to raise concerns with those Member States that so far have not complied with their obligations.

- *European Asylum Support Office*

**Actions to speed up the relocation process and increase the registration capacity in Greece and Italy:** Experts are deployed in a number of functions. In Greece, 12 experts currently support the registration process directly through joint processing. 14 other experts are involved in information provision, managing two hotlines and providing information regarding registration, relocation and Dublin procedures in the camps and in pre-registration exercise.<sup>31</sup> Based on the recommendations on how to enhance the matching process, aimed at matching applicants to specific Member States, EASO is finalising an action plan together with the Greek Asylum Service to implement the support.

In Italy, EASO is currently deploying 32 out of the 74 requested experts from Member States and associated countries: 9 experts in the hotspots, 4 experts in two mobile teams (based in Rome and Catania), 13 experts in relocation hubs, and 6 experts in the Dublin Unit in Rome. EASO is also deploying up to 48 cultural mediators (for Arabic, Tigrinya and Kurdish) to support the relocation process (as of 11 July, 35 cultural mediators are deployed on the ground).

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<sup>30</sup> This emergency assistance comes on top of the EUR 509 million allocated to Greece for the period 2014-2020 through its national programmes under the Home Affairs Funds (AMIF and ISF), where substantial funding is also available to support the implementation of asylum policies.

<sup>31</sup> As reported in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report, a further planned increase of staff, with another 18 Member States experts to support the registration, had to be postponed as a number of the Asylum Service staff are engaged in the pre-registration exercise.

### **3 Resettlement**

Based on the information received from the participating States, 8,268 people have been resettled in the period until 11 July 2016 in the framework of the resettlement scheme of 20 July 2015 to 20 resettling States (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). A majority of States participating in the scheme indicated that their resettlement efforts were primarily, but not exclusively, directed at Syrians staying in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

The number of resettlements from Turkey continues to increase as Member States finalise their assessments of files referred to them by Turkey via UNHCR. Since 4 April 2016, 802 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under the resettlement part of the 1:1 scheme. An increased number of Member States are also actively participating in the scheme. Since the last progress report, in addition to Finland, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Luxembourg, and Portugal, resettlements have also taken place to Latvia and Spain.

The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March foresees the activation of the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey, once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU were ending or at least had substantially and sustainably reduced. Standard Operating Procedures for a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey are currently being developed in the Council in close cooperation with the Commission, EASO, UNHCR and IOM. Negotiations on the text that was shared with Turkey on 7 June are ongoing. Once the Standard Operating Procedures are agreed, an assessment should be made whether the conditions for triggering the implementation of this scheme have been fulfilled.

As regards the proposal tabled by the Commission on 21 March 2016 to make available further places for resettlement or other forms of legal admission from Turkey by amending Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September on the relocation of applicants for international protection from Italy and Greece, the Council is awaiting the opinion of the Parliament which is expected in September 2016, before adopting the Decision. It is important that this proposal is adopted swiftly so as to enable Member States to use the flexibility provided therein.

The Commission has also today adopted a proposal for a regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework<sup>32</sup> and calls upon the European Parliament and the Council to give priority to this proposal.

### **4 Way forward**

Greece continues to face a humanitarian crisis that requires a quick and full implementation of the obligations assumed by Member States in the Council Decisions on relocation. As for Italy, in line with well-established seasonal trends, the number of arrivals is increasing and will lead to a rapid increase of applicants eligible for relocation.

At its last meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> of June, the European Council<sup>33</sup> recognised the urgency of the situation and reiterated its call for further action to accelerate the implementation of the

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<sup>32</sup> OJ C [...], [...], p. [...].

relocation and resettlement schemes. The calls made by the Heads of State or Government must be matched with determined action by the competent national services on the ground.

The Commission acknowledges the progress and efforts that have been made, which are reflected in the continuous increased rate of relocation, at least in the case of Greece. However, the results achieved do not yet measure up to the calls made and the scale of the challenge faced. The Commission considered in its First Report on Relocation and Resettlement<sup>34</sup> that at least 6,000 relocations should be completed per month.

Greece is carrying out a mass, rapid pre-registration exercise that will accelerate the identification and full registration of applicants eligible for relocation. 34,000 applicants are expected to be eligible for relocation. Greece needs to continue increasing its processing capacity to avoid creating a bottleneck after the pre-registration is completed, so that applicants can fully lodge their applications as swiftly as possible, urgently establish the additional relocation centres and continue relocating those that are eligible.

In Italy, the continuous increase of applicants eligible for relocation (4,650 Eritreans to be relocated) requires the Italian authorities to quickly step up its processing capacity, cooperate more closely with the Member States of relocation and finalise and swiftly implement the relocation workflow further developing its administrative capacity. Italy should also urgently implement the pilot relocation for unaccompanied minors and establish specific procedures allowing for the relocation of this category of vulnerable applicants.

For their part, Member States should urgently provide an adequate response by increasing the number of pledges, notably for unaccompanied minors, carefully planning relocation transfers for the upcoming six months and reducing the response time to relocation requests (including limiting additional security checks to only specific and duly justified cases). Greece and Italy will also need additional support from Member States so that EASO can deploy the experts essential to increase the registration. These should be made available for at least six months.

The Commission urges Member States to fully comply with their obligations under the Council Decisions on relocation, and calls on all Member States to engage more actively in relocation and pledge and relocate in accordance with their allocation and on a regular basis both from Italy and Greece. Those Member States who have not yet made any pledges, or have not yet relocated anyone, should do so without delay.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor and report regularly on the implementation of the two Council Decisions on relocation. The Commission reserves the right to take action against those Member States not complying with their obligations.

In parallel, Member States should continue delivering on their resettlement commitments, including as part of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> European Council Conclusions of 7 March 2016. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/07-eu-turkey-meeting-statement>; European Council Conclusions of 28 June 2016. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/28-euco-conclusions/>

<sup>34</sup> COM(2016) 165 final.

<sup>35</sup> Second Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement (COM(2016) 349).