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

Ninth report on relocation and resettlement

1 Introduction

The Ninth Report on Relocation and Resettlement provides an updated state of play since the last report of 8 December¹ and assesses the actions undertaken by all relevant stakeholders from 8 December 2016 until 7 February 2017 (the reporting period) to deliver on the commitments under the relocation and resettlement schemes.

Since 5 December 2016, 3,873 people² have arrived in Greece. The total number of migrants present in Greece remained stable compared to the previous reporting period and as of 7 February there are around 62,600 migrants, with around 15,000 on the islands and around 47,600 persons on mainland Greece.³ In Italy, 15,614 people⁴ have arrived since 5 December 2016. Eritreans, the main nationality eligible for relocation in Italy,⁵ represented 3.6% of arrivals.

In the 8th Report, the Commission set specific monthly targets of at least 1,000 people relocated from Italy and at least 2,000 from Greece as of December 2016. The European Council, at its last meeting on 15 December,⁶ endorsed the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, which included the relocation targets for Greece, and reiterated its call to further intensify efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied minors, and existing resettlement schemes. Despite these calls, the results are mixed.

During the reporting period, 3,813 additional persons have been relocated, bringing the total number of persons relocated so far to 11,966 (8,766 from Greece and 3,200 from Italy).⁷ December, with 1,926 people relocated (764 from Italy and 1,162 from Greece), marked a new record for relocations both from Italy and Greece which allowed reaching the benchmark of more than 10,000 people relocated. January's results (551 relocations for Italy and 1,131 for Greece) confirmed the stabilisation of relocations from Greece at around 1,000 per month. However, whilst these numbers continue to represent a positive trend overall, they still fall short of the targets set by the Commission, and in the case of relocations from Greece, more widely endorsed by the European Council.

¹ COM(2016) 791 final.

² The number of detections of illegal border-crossings between border crossing points reported by Greece from Turkey through sea and land borders from 5 December 2016 until 5 February 2017 as recorded in Joint Operations Reporting Applications.

³ Source: Greek authorities.

⁴ Source: Italian Ministry of the Interior covering from 5 December 2016 until 5 February 2017.

⁵ Currently the nationalities eligible for relocation are: Burundi, Eritrea, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Syria and Yemen. As mentioned in previous reports, although some nationalities are no longer eligible for relocation, this does not affect those already identified as persons in possible need for international protection (e.g., those pre-registered can still be relocated).

⁶ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/12/15-euco-conclusions-final/>.

⁷ Nine transfers reported as relocation transfers in previous reports proved to be Dublin transfers and not relocation cases (four cases from Italy to Portugal in December 2015 and April 2016; one case from Italy to the Netherlands in November 2016; one case from Greece to Luxembourg in June 2016, one case from Greece to France in June 2016 and two cases from Greece to Romania in August 2016). These have therefore been discounted from the total and from the specific Member States' transfers reported in the Annexes. In addition, during this reporting period, one case from Greece to Spain in December 2016 and one from Greece to Norway in January 2017 were also Dublin transfers and therefore have not been counted in the totals for those countries.

As regards resettlement, implementation of the July 2015 Conclusions⁸ to resettle 22,504 people is on track with 13,968 people in need of international protection resettled so far, which is more than half of the agreed number. Since 6 December 2016, 913⁹ people have been resettled mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Part of the resettlement under this European scheme serves also to implement the 1:1 mechanism set out in the EU-Turkey Statement. Since the starting date of 4 April,¹⁰ 3,098 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey to the EU within that mechanism, including 487¹¹ since the previous report.

2 Relocation

2.1 Main highlights during the reporting period

After the adoption of the 8th Report, the Commission called bilaterally on almost all Member States to increase their efforts to meet the targets. Already active Member States and Associated Countries reacted positively and communicated to the Commission their planning for monthly pledges. However, the picture is disappointing with certain other Member States. Hungary, Austria and Poland remain the only Member States that have not relocated anyone. Slovakia continues relocating on a very limited basis and the Czech Republic has not pledged since May 2016 and has not relocated anyone since August 2016.

Against the target of 2,000 monthly relocations, 1,162 people were relocated from **Greece** in December 2016 and 1,131 people in January 2017 and there were 1,178 pledges in December and 1,550 in January 2017. Achieving the target is possible provided all Member States pledge and transfer on a stable monthly basis and according to the size of their allocation. In particular, achieving the 2,000 target would require that those Member States that have not relocated anyone or only a limited number (Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Poland and Slovakia) start doing so immediately. In addition, it would require Belgium and Spain to pledge on a monthly basis according to the size of their allocation and Portugal, Romania and Lithuania to start pledging again on a monthly basis. However it should also be acknowledged that Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and Finland are well on track to meet their obligations. Furthermore, at the present rate, Switzerland and Norway will fully complete their relocation commitments by March 2017. Other Member States that only recently started relocating from Greece have further to go to catch-up with more performing Member States and Associated Countries.

The Greek authorities have increased further the efficiency of registration and rescheduled appointments so that by mid-March 2017 all pre-registered applicants (including those belonging to nationalities eligible for relocation) should be fully registered.¹² Meeting the

⁸ Conclusions of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on resettling through multilateral and national scheme 20,000 persons in clear need of international protection (11130/15).

⁹ The figure published in the previous report had to be adjusted due to updated information subsequently received from the resettling states. Instead of 13,887 resettlements reported, the correct number of people resettled by 5 December 2016 was 13,055.

¹⁰ SN 38/16, 18.03.2016.

¹¹ The figure published in the previous report had to be adjusted to reflect the fact that resettlements of Syrians from Turkey to Norway in the context of the 1:1 scheme is not counted against returns of Syrians from Greece.

¹² <http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?p=1974>

monthly target as soon as possible will be essential to avoid lengthy waiting periods for applicants and risks of secondary movements.

In **Italy**, 764 people were relocated in December 2016 representing a steady growth over the previous months and the highest ever since the start of the scheme. While the number of pledges in December 2016 was 735, in January the 1,000-pledge target was achieved (1,025 places pledged). In the last four months, there has been a rapid increase of relocations from Italy (from 230 to around 750 per month), but the number of relocated persons in January went down for the first time (551 people relocated). This seems partly due to the holiday season, but also to operational and logistical issues, in some cases linked to the dispersion of applicants all over the Italian territory.

Due to the constant influx of new migrants, including from Eritrea, the number of applicants for relocation, based on information from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, remained stable between 5,300 and 5,800 Eritreans.

Seven countries (Germany, France, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Switzerland) are fully engaged in relocation from Italy. Of those, Malta and Finland are on track to meet their obligations, whereas, at the present rate, Norway and Switzerland will fully complete their relocation commitments already by March 2017. Member States, particularly those not yet relocating from Italy, should step up their efforts so that the monthly target of 1,000 relocations from Italy is achieved.

For its part, Italy plans to increase the number of staff processing applications in the Dublin Unit, and showed flexibility regarding security screening. The arrangements with Europol to facilitate exceptional additional security checks were put for the first time in practice in January 2017 by a request from Norway. On the basis of the Relocation Protocol for Italy, a first joint security interview by Europol, Norwegian and Italian officers should take place in Italy in February. This should serve to draw lessons from the procedure and to increase the necessary trust in the system by all Member States relocating from Italy.

The number of **unaccompanied minors**¹³ arriving in Italy continued to increase: 28,129 minors arrived in Italy in 2016 of which 25,772 (91.6%) were unaccompanied, including 3,806 Eritrean, 218 Syrian, 394 Iraqi and 13 Yemeni.¹⁴ In addition, by 23 January 2017, 462 unaccompanied minors have arrived in Italy, of whom four belong to a nationality eligible for relocation. In Greece, the National Centre for Social Solidarity reports that as of 27 January, 2,200 unaccompanied minors were estimated to be present in Greece. As already reported, the mass pre-registration exercise in Greece identified 1,225 unaccompanied minors,¹⁵ of which

¹³ Article 2(1) of the Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU) defines "unaccompanied minor" as a minor (under 18 years old) who arrives on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied "by an adult responsible for him or her whether by law or by the practice of the Member State concerned" [emphasis added]. As a consequence of the differences in law and practice among Member States, the definition of unaccompanied minors varies from Member State to Member State which makes that separated children, including minors married to adults, be considered unaccompanied in some Member States while not in others. These also creates inconsistencies in the reporting of total number of unaccompanied minors relocated since some Member States only consider as such those on their own and exclude from the reporting separated children relocated.

¹⁴ Only nationalities potentially eligible for relocation mentioned.

¹⁵ http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Preregistration-data_template_5_EN_EXTERNAL.pdf.

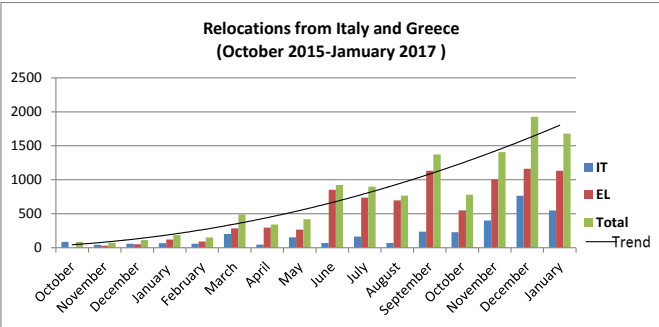
48% (about 588) belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation (36% Syrians and 12% Iraqis).¹⁶

As of beginning of February 2017, 523 unaccompanied minors (following the Greek law definition) have been registered but only 248 have been relocated. The main difficulty is to relocate married minors (particularly when under the age of 17) since many Member States have legal obstacles to allow the relocation of this category of separated children (e.g. the adult marrying a minor may be sentenced). As a consequence, they do not accept them or even reject relocation requests submitted.¹⁷ Member States should explore ways of facilitating the relocation of this category of separated children.

Italy is also making efforts to facilitate the relocation of unaccompanied minors; however, the procedure to make the relocation of unaccompanied minors travelling on their own possible still needs to be developed further. Only one separated child was relocated to the Netherlands in November 2016 from Italy.

The total number of relocated minors in this reporting period was 74 (to Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Finland and Switzerland) bringing the total number of unaccompanied minors relocated to 249¹⁸ almost exclusively from Greece.

2.2 Actions by the Member States of relocation



From 7 December until 7 February, 3,813 additional persons were relocated, 2,558 from Greece (including the first relocation transfer to Liechtenstein)¹⁹ and 1,255 from Italy.²⁰ France is the country that has relocated the largest number of applicants (2,727) so far, followed by Germany (2,042) and the Netherlands (1,361).

Actions to address the limited number of pledges: In the reporting period, 13 Member States (Germany, Belgium, Estonia, France, Croatia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

¹⁶ The biggest group of unaccompanied minors in Greece are Afghans, who are not eligible for relocation. However, the Greek government is in contact with several Member States to negotiate a possible voluntary transfer of these minors with a different status, other than as applicants for international protection.

¹⁷ The 2016 Fundamental Rights Agency' Report on separated children provides data on Member States legal provisions and treatment with respect to migrant minors' married. See in particular Table 1, page 11 of the Report, available at http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-december-2016-monthly-migration-report-separated-childr.pdf

¹⁸ The Greek authorities and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) do not use the same definition of unaccompanied minors; as a consequence figures reported by the Greek authorities and IOM differ. According to IOM data, the total number of minors relocated during the reporting period is 51.

¹⁹ 934 to Germany, 13 to Cyprus, 21 to Estonia, 355 to France, 171 to Ireland, 48 to Latvia, 10 to Liechtenstein, 44 to Lithuania, 29 to Luxembourg, 172 to the Netherlands, 184 to Norway, 231 to Portugal, 26 to Romania, 252 to Spain, 18 to Finland and 50 to Switzerland.

²⁰ 493 to Germany, 1 Latvia, 21 to Luxembourg, 92 to the Netherlands, 335 to Norway, 10 to Portugal, 2 to Romania, 94 to Spain and 207 to Switzerland.

Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Finland)²¹ and Switzerland and Norway²² submitted 4,413 formal pledges (1,760 formal pledges submitted for Italy and 2,653 for Greece). The total number of formal pledges by Member States of relocation amounts to 22,928 (7,599 to Italy and 15,329 to Greece).

Belgium, Germany, Estonia, France, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Switzerland have announced monthly pledges for Greece whereas for Italy only Belgium, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Switzerland did so. In addition, Luxembourg has announced pledges every two months for both Italy and Greece.

Austria²³ and Hungary continue being the only two countries that have not submitted any pledge nor relocated at all. Since April 2016, Poland has not taken forward the implementation of its pledges and has not pledged nor relocated any applicant.²⁴ In addition, some Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic) have not pledged for more than seven months.

Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests: During the reporting period Member States have made some progress to reduce the response time to relocation requests but they are still not complying with the 10 working-days target set in the relocation protocols. As referred to in previous reports, security interviews should be carried out only in duly justified cases and within the 10 working-days target. Member States will need to improve their processing capacity to accelerate the response time.

Some of the rejections are still based on grounds not foreseen by the Council Decisions, such as nationality (even if the person belongs to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation). The reasoning of rejections should also improve to meet the requirements of the Council Decisions. In this sense, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland can be considered good examples on how to justify rejections. Sharing information is crucial for the security of the European Union. Therefore, Member States should not reject certain applications merely referring to security issues in general terms and should work together to address this matter in a comprehensive manner. In response to concerns raised by several Member States regarding sharing security-related information, Europol has offered a dedicated secured communication channel for Member States to safely provide reasons for rejections of relocation requests. This channel is operational as of 1 December 2016 but so far no Member State has made any use of it to notify reasons for rejections. In Greece, the Hellenic Police has put in place a national security correspondent as a contact point for communicating the grounds for rejections. The

²¹ Germany 1,000 for Italy and 1,000 for Greece, Belgium 35 for Italy and 65 for Greece, Estonia 58 for Greece, France 50 for Italy and 400 for Greece, Croatia 20 for Italy and 30 for Greece, Ireland 80 for Greece, Latvia 30 for Italy and 60 for Greece, Lithuania 10 for Italy and 40 for Greece, Luxembourg 50 for Greece, Malta 15 for Greece, the Netherlands 100 for Italy and 200 for Greece, Slovenia, 15 for Italy and 35 for Greece, and Finland 50 for Italy and 100 for Greece.

²² Norway 250 for Italy and 200 for Greece and Switzerland 200 for Italy and 320 for Greece.

²³ In accordance with Council Decision 2016/408 of 10 March 2016, 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, the relocation to Austria of 1,065 applicants shall be suspended until 11 March 2017. However, the obligations under Decision 2015/1601 continue to apply to Austria in respect of the relocation of the remaining allocation, so pledges and relocations are still required.

²⁴ 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.

Commission stresses once more the possibility of exchanging fingerprints via police cooperation channels for security verification at national level, particularly in cases where applicants lacked ID or travel documents.

Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants, including unaccompanied minors: The pace of relocation of unaccompanied minors has been similar to the previous reporting period due to difficulties to relocate married minors as indicated in section 2.1. Some Member States are also showing reluctance to accept other categories of vulnerable people (e.g. seriously ill); others are interpreting the Council Decisions too strictly considering that the pledge expired when the transfer had to be postponed for health concerns (e.g. the person is not fit for travel due to illness) beyond the 2-month time limit foreseen in the Council Decisions. According to the Council Decisions, vulnerable applicants should be relocated as a priority and flexibility is required when, due to health reasons, the transfer has to be postponed and implemented beyond the 2-month time limit. This is even more so when the Member State of relocation is not respecting the time limit agreed to respond to a relocation request. The Council Decisions allow for an extension by a further 4-week period and ultimately even beyond the extended time-limit. More flexibility by the Member States of relocation would therefore be desirable.

Actions to accelerate the transfer of applicants: The time delay between the acceptance by the Member State of relocation and the actual transfer has not significantly decreased. As mentioned in the previous report, while in some cases these delays are due to additional checks carried out by Member States after acceptances, other delays are due to operational and logistical problems or to the lack of reception capacity in the Member State of relocation. More flexibility by the Member States of relocation would be desirable regarding organisation and dates of flights, including when transfers take place after the two-month limit due to health reasons, and charter flights. Member States will also need to ensure their reception capacity is capable of accommodating relocated applicants.

Actions to reinforce the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)'s capacity to support Italy and Greece: on 19 December 2016 EASO amended a Management Board Decision on the profiles and the overall number of the experts made available for the asylum support teams. This Decision allows EASO interim staff, under the guidance of EASO permanent staff and national experts, to support the work of Asylum Support Teams. EASO will seek a balance between the number of national experts and interim staff.

For Greece, on 20 December 2016 EASO launched the open first call for 26 experts of various profiles²⁵ under the new Operating Plan. This first call covers the whole year 2017, allowing Member States to organise the deployment of their experts further into the future. During the last Asylum Intervention Pool National Contact Point meeting held in Malta on 12 and 13 January 2017, several Member States (Germany and the Netherlands) announced that they will share with EASO their long-term planning of deployment of experts.

The total number of experts deployed in Greece to support the relocation scheme as of 6 February is 19 asylum experts, out of which 3 individual experts, and 40 interpreters. There is

²⁵ Of an overall need of 193 experts as foreseen in the new Operating Plan.

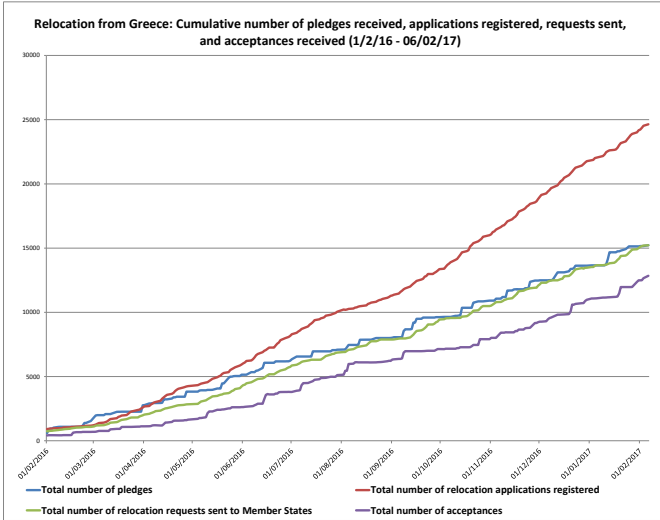
currently a shortage of 9 experts,²⁶ which is foreseen to go up to a shortage of 21 experts starting from the week of 13 March.

For Italy, EASO has issued its first call under the new Operating Plan (signed with Italy on 22 December 2016) for an overall number of 72 experts. As of 6 February, 48 asylum experts and 43 cultural mediators were deployed in Italy. There is currently a shortage of 24 experts, which will go up to a shortage of 35 experts starting from the week of 13 March. Member States should continue nominating experts to respond to EASO's various calls on a regular basis ensuring longer deployments and more senior and specialised profiles.

2.3 Actions by Greece and Italy

- *Greece*

Actions to accelerate the registration and processing of migrants and the registration capacity of the Greek Asylum Service: Following the mass pre-registration exercise, on which the Commission has reported earlier, the Greek Asylum Service scheduled the appointments for full lodging of asylum applications. After further increasing the efficiency of the registration procedure, the Greek Asylum Service rescheduled appointments so that the full registration will be completed by mid-March 2017 (instead of April as originally foreseen). People that missed the pre-registration exercise can still access the asylum procedure by making an appointment via the Skype system.



The gap between the number of registrations by the Greek Asylum Service and the total number of pledges increased during the reporting period (between 6 December and 6 February Greece registered 5,233 relocation applications, while the number of additional pledges was 2,733). In total by 6 February, Greece had registered 24,640 applications while the total number of pledges was 15,329, which means that there are about 9,000 cases ready to be relocated without pledges. Meeting the monthly target for pledges and transfers becomes a priority to

ensure the resumption of Dublin transfers and relocate all eligible applicants within the timeframe foreseen by the Council Decisions.

Actions to improve the reception capacity in Greece: As of 7 February, the total reception capacity in Greece stands at 75,182 places²⁷ in temporary facilities and permanent reception places on the mainland, both for irregular migrants and persons who have expressed their will

²⁶ The Greek Asylum Service made an additional request for two Dublin experts for the Dublin Unit to the extent they are available.

²⁷ This figure includes the places provided under the UNHCR rental scheme capacity and the organised reception places provided by the Greek authorities in mainland Greece and at the hotspots. http://mindigital.gr/images/prosfygiko/REFUGEE_FLOWS-07-02-2017.pdf

to apply for international protection or have already lodged their applications for international protection. The total capacity of the 40 permanent sites on the mainland is estimated to be around 27,000 places.

Out of the 20,000 places committed for applicants eligible for relocation under the rental scheme by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),²⁸ as of 7 February, 19,309 places were available²⁹, including 1,831 places in buildings, 5,132 places in hotels, 10,865 places in apartments, 417 places in host families, and 704 places in dedicated facilities for unaccompanied minors. The current occupancy rate is around 80%.³⁰ It should be noted that UNHCR reached the 20,000 places commitment in December 2016 and even exceeded it (by 31 December 2016, 21,057 places were available). However, some of the places are not sustainable in the long run (e.g. hotel vouchers) and are being replaced by alternatives (e.g., apartments/buildings). An updated needs assessment of Greek reception needs will be carried out in the coming months and the size of the rental scheme will be re-evaluated.

In addition, as regards dedicated relocation centres, as of 6 February, only one of the three relocation centres committed by the Greek authorities (Lagadikia) has been established. Due to the deteriorating weather conditions in northern Greece, all tents were removed and 60 fully winterised containers were placed. As a consequence the site has now a capacity for 360 people. More containers will be placed in the coming months to double the site's capacity. For the remaining two, the Greek authorities have not yet designated suitable sites. Discussions are still ongoing between UNHCR and the Greek authorities regarding the provision of more sites for the construction of dedicated relocation centres, notably a relocation centre in the Attica region with a capacity for 3,000 people. As mentioned in previous reports, the Commission urges Greece to designate these sites as soon as possible to avoid bottlenecks in the implementation of the last stages of the relocation workflow following the mass pre-registration exercise and to allow cost-efficiency in the relocation process.

- *Italy*

Actions to increase the number of hotspots and to make them fully operational: The total number of arrivals in 2016 was 181,346. Against this record number, the total capacity of the four operational hotspots (1,600 places in Pozzallo, Lampedusa, Trapani and Taranto) is not sufficient. Only less than one third of the disembarkations take place in the four operational hotspots (52,337 persons). However, when taking into account disembarkations in six further ports applying the hotspot Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)³¹, the proportion is two thirds. On 7 December, the Ministry of Interior decided to designate 15 ports of

²⁸ The Delegation Agreement reached with UNHCR for the 20,000 places rental scheme in January 2016 primarily benefits asylum seekers eligible for relocation. The Delegation Agreement was revised in July 2016 in order to make it clearer in the text that the accommodation scheme includes also the possibility to establish places in relocation sites managed by UNHCR, and that the target group of the accommodation scheme includes not only relocation candidates but also other asylum seekers. UNHCR agreed to make 6,000 places from the rental scheme available to relocation centres to accommodate all fully registered relocation applicants.

²⁹ UNHCR data: 393 places for unaccompanied children are funded by other donors.

³⁰ 309 places for unaccompanied minors are funded by other donors.

³¹ http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/hotspots_sops_-_english_version.pdf.

disembarkation as ports applying the hotspot SOPs. Italy should accelerate the opening of already announced additional hotspots and the upgrade of other ports of disembarkations.

The situation of unaccompanied minors in the hotspots is particularly challenging. They often remain in the hotspot structures or other first line reception centres for a longer time since the reception system does not allow for an automatic transfer to centres in other parts of Italy, contrary to adults and families. Other vulnerable categories also stay for longer periods at hotspots. The Italian authorities should take action in order to provide for dedicated areas and assistance in all hotspots, speed up procedures to allow transfers to first or second line reception facilities in the shortest possible timeframe where a sufficient number of places in should be available, and timely appoint guardians.

On 19-20 January, Italy and EASO organised the first session on reception of unaccompanied minors in the context of asylum, aiming at capacity building in identification of persons with special needs (including unaccompanied children seeking asylum) and presentation of good practices in the field of reception of children in situations of high influx. Further sessions will take place in February and March 2017.

Actions to improve processing capacities in Italy: As previously reported, the capacity of the Italian authorities, including of the Dublin Unit to register and process applications, needs to increase in order to accelerate the registration of persons belonging to the nationalities eligible for relocation and fill new pledges. Italy could also consider receiving additional support from EASO for this purpose. Moreover, the repartition of relocation applicants over many different centres throughout the whole Italian territory, which became to some extent unavoidable due to the record influx of migrants in 2016, should be mitigated. The Italian authorities could consider a more centralised system where relocation applicants would be concentrated in fewer dedicated relocation centres at least in the last stages of the procedure, so as to facilitate the various steps before the relocation transfers. Such a system would allow for better facilitation of the pre-departure phase, including the necessary health checks and cultural orientation sessions. This should also contribute to reducing the risks of absconding, as relocation applications will be processed more speedily.

Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests: As mentioned in Section 2.1, the arrangements with Europol to facilitate exceptional additional security interviews were put for the first time in practice in January 2017 by a request from Norway.

Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants and unaccompanied minors: The Commission continues to support the Italian authorities in all efforts aimed at clarifying the procedures to enable the relocation of unaccompanied minors. This should result in relocations starting as soon as possible. In order to accelerate these procedures, the Italian authorities should create one or more dedicated relocation Hubs for unaccompanied minors, and consider making use of EASO's guidance and further support. Member States should continue making pledges for unaccompanied minors so that places are available when the first requests are submitted. Making relocation work for unaccompanied minors can contribute to reducing absconding. In light of the direct applicability of the Council Decisions, guardians should already consider the relocation of eligible unaccompanied minors under their custody as an option. The Italian authorities should ensure that eligible unaccompanied minors are informed about relocation as soon as possible upon disembarkation.

Actions to limit secondary movements: As part of actions taken by the Italian authorities to limit secondary movements, the Italian police continue regularly transferring migrants, who moved irregularly from the South to the North of the country, back to the reception facilities in Southern Italy. As indicated below, EASO has intensified the activities of the mobile team that performs registration for relocation in various areas where candidates for relocation are accommodated (based on needs indicated by the Italian authorities) outside of registration Hubs. EASO has also deployed a permanent asylum support team for registration in two additional locations. The presence and movements of irregular migrants on the Italian territory should be closely monitored, and irregular secondary movements prevented.

2.4 Actions by the Commission and EU agencies

- *European Commission*

The main activities carried out by the Commission have been highlighted throughout the report, including bilateral contacts with Member States to make progress on the targets. The Commission will continue to raise concerns with those Member States that are falling behind in implementing the Council Decisions. Should tangible progress not be reached in the coming months, the Commission will not hesitate to make use of its powers under the Treaties.

In addition, the Commission has been discussing at the regular Liaison Officers' meetings organised by the Commission in Greece (14 December 2016) and Italy (31 January 2017) ways to improve information provision during the relocation procedure, including the pre-departure information and cultural orientation sessions, with a view to better managing expectations and thus preventing secondary movements or absconding from the procedure and to further building applicants' trust towards the relocation scheme. The Commission developed a questionnaire and a concept paper identifying priority actions leading to better information provision at each step of the relocation procedure. To this end the current relocation brochures developed by EASO should be updated and leaflets provided to applicants by countries of relocation should be reviewed and updated if necessary. The Commission has also proposed, in cooperation with EASO, to provide those countries facing challenges concerning secondary movements or absconding with tailor-made tools on information provision (e.g. videos, country leaflets, etc.).

Funding for relocation is made available for Italy and Greece and the Member States of relocation through their respective Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) National Programmes. These are being amended to take account of the amendment to Council Decision 2015/1601. The Commission encourages the simultaneous transfers of mixed couples and families (e.g. one spouse belongs to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation and the other and/or children to a different nationality) to respect the principle of family unit. The transfer of the spouse who does not belong to a nationality eligible for relocation is based on a Dublin take charge request and therefore Italy and Greece will not benefit from the EUR 500 lump-sum and the Member State of relocation will not benefit from the EUR 6,000 lump-sum. However, Member States can explore the possibility of covering such costs through their respective AMIF National Programmes.

As foreseen in the needs assessment carried out in cooperation with Italy's Ministry of Interior and other relevant stakeholders, during the reporting period the Commission received from the Italian authorities an application for AMIF emergency assistance relating to the provision

of services in accommodation facilities for relocation candidates (EU contribution requested: EUR 14.8 million). In addition, in the previous reporting period, the Commission received a number of other applications not related to relocation for a total amount of EUR 113.4 million. Whereas the Commission has granted EUR 38.2 million, the request for EUR 14.8 million (as well as others) is currently being evaluated by the Commission. A decision is expected shortly.

As the current Delegation Agreement with UNHCR for the rental scheme in Greece ended on 31 December 2016, discussions between the Commission, UNHCR and the Greek authorities are ongoing for the extension of the scheme in 2017, on the basis of an updated assessment of Greece's reception needs.

- *European Asylum Support Office*

Actions to speed up the relocation process and increase the registration capacity in Greece and Italy: On 20 and 22 December 2016 EASO signed new Operating Plans for 2017 with Greece and Italy respectively. The Operating Plans outline all support activities to Greece and Italy for implementation in 2017. Besides the support to the relocation scheme, the Operating Plans cover support measures to the general asylum procedure, including the Dublin procedure, the reception system, and for Greece, support for the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement.

In **Greece**, as of 6 February, the EASO teams supporting the Greek Asylum Service for registration and further processing consist of 8 experts in Thessaloniki³² and the escalation desk consists of 5 experts in Athens. Moreover, EASO has deployed 4 experts for information provision in Athens and Thessaloniki, another 2 Dublin experts in support of the Dublin Unit and 40 interpreters. EASO has also delivered fully equipped mobile offices to the Greek Asylum Service in Thessaloniki to further support the relocation registration procedure. These mobile offices will make it possible to merge the registration procedures of Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli to further increase the efficiency of the procedure, allowing EASO to deploy up to 12 registration experts in Thessaloniki.

Following the kick-off meeting in November, EASO is now together with the Greek Asylum Service piloting a matching tool: the functional requirements are defined, registration fields in the Greek database Alkyoni and corresponding registration forms are being adapted, the matching algorithm is being refined for testing, and the communication of data between Alkyoni database and the matching tool is being developed. A first usable interface of the matching tool is expected to be ready by February 2017.

In **Italy**, EASO is as of 6 February deploying 48 out of the 72 requested experts from Member States and Associated Countries: 9 experts in the hotspots, 9 experts in two mobile teams (based in Rome and Catania), 16 experts in registration Hubs, 7 experts in the registration mobile team, and 7 experts in the Dublin Unit in Rome. EASO is also deploying up to 43 cultural mediators (for Arabic, Tigrinya and Kurdish) to support the relocation process. In the reporting period EASO has intensified the activities of the mobile team that performs registration for relocation in various locations where candidates for relocation are accommodated (based on needs indicated by the Italian authorities) outside of registration

³² The Greek Asylum Service has rescheduled the registrations planned in Alexandroupoli in the office of Thessaloniki as of 6 February.

Hubs.³³ The mobile team also supports the local *Questura* by building the capacity of Police officers in performing registrations themselves.

3 Resettlement

Based on the information received from the participating States more than half of the 22,504 resettlements agreed under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 have been completed. Since 6 December 2016, 913³⁴ people have been resettled mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. As of 6 February 2017, 13,968 people have been resettled to 21 resettling States (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland, and Netherlands as well as Associated Countries Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Iceland have already fulfilled their pledges. Despite an overall positive outlook, Member States who have not yet resettled under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 and those who are still far away from reaching their target should step up their efforts.

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. This includes efforts from Member States to resettle Syrians from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016.

The number of resettlements from Turkey continues to increase. Member States are advancing well with preparing further resettlement operations, including missions to Turkey to interview resettlement candidates. The Turkish authorities are delivering on their promise to step up efforts to provide larger lists of referrals. Lists for a total of 10,000 persons were submitted in January 2017.

Since 4 April 2016, 3,098 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under the resettlement part of the 1:1 scheme of the EU-Turkey Statement. Altogether, 487 people were resettled under this mechanism since the last reporting period and the remaining number of all pledges is 10,402. Resettlements under 1:1 scheme have so far taken place to Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Additionally, Norway has so far resettled 150 Syrians from Turkey since 4 April.³⁵

As previously reported, Council Decision (EU) 2016/1754³⁶ amending the second Council Decision on relocation has been adopted. The amendment allows Member States to meet their respective obligations under the 54,000 allocation by using either relocation or legal admission of Syrian nationals present in Turkey. The amendment requires modification to the AMIF National Programmes. As an immediate follow-up to the adoption of the Council Decision (EU) 2016/1754, and as part of the exercise to amend AMIF National Programmes

³³ To date, the team has covered 26 locations all over Italy.

³⁴ The figure published in the previous report had to be adjusted due to updated information subsequently received from the resettling states. Instead of 13,887 resettlements reported, the correct number of people resettled by 5 December 2016 was 13,055.

³⁵ Although Norway applies the standard operating procedures for resettlement agreed with Turkey in the ambit of the 1:1 scheme, the number of resettlements to Norway in the context of the 1:1 scheme is not counted against returns of Syrians from Greece.

³⁶ OJ L 268, 1.10.2016, p. 82–84.

the Commission has received first indications from Member States on the number of Syrians present in Turkey to whom the Member States plan to grant legal admission under this Decision. From those indications received so far, Member States plan to admit from Turkey over 34,000 Syrians on this basis, including via resettlement.

The Commission's proposal for a regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework³⁷ adopted on 13 July 2016 is currently being examined by the co-legislators.

4 Way forward

The Heads of State or Government have repeatedly recognised the urgent need to address Europe's migratory situation and have called for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation scheme, as an essential expression of solidarity towards frontline Member States. In December 2016, the European Council reiterated once more the need for Member States to further intensify efforts to accelerate relocation and endorsed the Joint Action Plan to accelerate the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement which included the specific relocation target for Greece.

This call from the European Council comes against a background of mixed results over the reporting period. Achieving the targets of at least 1,000 persons relocated from Italy and at least 2,000 persons from Greece every month is possible if all Member States now start pledging and relocating on a monthly basis. A number of Member States and Associated Countries are leading the way, delivering on their legal obligations and thereby applying solidarity in practice and the other Member States should follow their example. All Member States also need to nominate more experts to respond to EASO's various calls on a regular basis, ensuring longer deployments and more senior and specialised profiles. These common efforts will help alleviate the pressure on Italy and Greece.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor the situation and engage with Member States in finding the most effective way to fully implement the two Council Decisions on relocation. In parallel, Member States should continue delivering on their resettlement commitments, and in some cases step up their efforts, including as part of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement.³⁸ The Commission will continue reporting on a regular basis and will present its Tenth Report in March 2017.

³⁷ COM(2016) 468 final.

³⁸ Fourth Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, COM(2016) 792 final.