



## Commission calls for renewed efforts in implementing solidarity measures under the European Agenda on Migration

Brussels, 2 March 2017

**Ahead of next week's European Council and in the form of three progress reports, the Commission is today making a renewed call on Member States to pick up the pace of relocation to alleviate pressure from Italy and Greece, with few having met their commitments in full.**

The Commission is also calling on Member States to make good on the strong political commitment given and fill gaps in manpower and equipment by the end of March for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. With the EU-Turkey Statement continuing, one year on, to keep irregular crossings under control but with arrivals still outpacing returns, the Commission is also calling on Greece and all Member States to keep up the momentum in implementing the Joint Action Plan to improve the situation in the islands.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"To improve our management of migration we need to continue to implement our comprehensive approach – from relocation and resettlement, to the operationalisation of the European Border and Coast Guard and through continued engagement with Turkey. All these measures have the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility at their core – a principle that binds each Member State. The European Council offers an opportunity to review our achievements so far and determine how our common decisions and commitments can be fulfilled without delay."*

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Responsibility cannot be fairly shared without solidarity. All our measures are interlinked, and Member States cannot cherry-pick what they deliver on. Right now, all operational pre-conditions to make relocation work are in place on the ground in Greece and Italy. It is up to Member States to act and deliver on their obligations to ensure that all those eligible are relocated in time. At the same time, Member States should continue to deliver on their commitments to resettle from Turkey, provide the necessary support for the processing of asylum applications in Greece and ensure full operational capability of the European Border and Coast Guard."*

### **A need for a renewed push on relocation and resettlement**

Despite February setting a new monthly record with around 1,940 relocations, the current pace of relocation is still well below expectations and below the European Council endorsed target of at least 3,000 monthly relocations from Greece and the target set by the Commission of at least 1,500 monthly relocations from Italy. Overall, 13,546 relocations have been carried out so far, 3,936 from Italy and 9,610 from Greece. Most importantly, the current pace will not allow for the relocation of all eligible applicants currently present in Greece and Italy by September 2017 – despite this being perfectly feasible. So far, only two Member States (Malta and Finland) are on track to meet their obligations for both Italy and Greece, whereas some (Hungary, Austria and Poland) are still refusing to participate in the scheme at all and others are doing so on a very limited basis (Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia). Italy, Greece, the EU agencies and international organisations have increased their capacities and are ready and on stand-by to facilitate meeting the monthly targets. It is now for the other Member States to equally deliver on their obligations. The Commission urges the Maltese Presidency and Member States to follow up on the Commission's call at the March Justice and Home Affairs Council. If Member States do not increase their relocations soon, the Commission will not hesitate to make use of its powers under the Treaties for those who have not complied with the obligations stemming from the Council decisions, noting that the legal obligation to relocate those eligible will not cease after September.

Conversely, progress on **resettlement** continues to be promising. Member States have provided safe and legal pathways to 14,422 persons so far, over half of the agreed 22,504 under the EU resettlement scheme. This includes the resettlement of 3,565 Syrians under the EU-Turkey Statement. Member States are advancing well on preparing further resettlement operations and have indicated they plan to admit a further 34,000 Syrians from Turkey, including via "One for One" resettlement and national schemes. As a consequence, the Commission has revised the funding programmes for the relevant

Member States to include €213 million in financial support of resettlement. Moreover, an assessment should be made as to whether the conditions for triggering the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme for Syrian refugees from Turkey are fulfilled, which would help boost resettlement.

## **Steady delivery of results in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement**

After almost one year, the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March continues to deliver tangible results, despite the challenging circumstances. **Daily crossings** from Turkey to the Greek islands have gone down from 10,000 persons in a single day in October 2015 to 43 a day now. Overall, arrivals have dropped by 98%. The number of **lives lost** in the Aegean Sea since the Statement took effect has also substantially fallen, from 1,100 (during the same period in 2015-2016) to 70. **Return operations** have continued to be carried out with a total of 1,487 returns since the Statement was activated. Yet arrivals continue to outpace the number of returns from Greece to Turkey which has led to additional pressure on the Greek islands. The measures set out in the Joint Action Plan agreed between Greece and the EU-Turkey Statement Coordinator, such as putting in place an efficient case tracking system, imposing geographical restrictions and creating sufficient reception capacity, should help to speed up returns. The Commission has today, for the first time, published a point by point progress report on each of the measures under the Joint Action Plan.

Progress on other areas of the Statement continues, with the Commission continuing to accelerate the delivery of funding under the **Facility for Refugees in Turkey**, as showed in the first Annual Report on the Facility published by the Commission in parallel today. **€1.5 billion out of the already allocated €2.2 billion for 2016-2017 has been contracted in record time, half of the total €3 billion budget for 2016-2017.** The Commission is also continuing to work with Turkey to encourage progress on meeting the outstanding benchmarks of the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap and the Council has started its examination of the negotiating directive for upgrading the Customs Union.

## **Progress in making the new European Border and Coast Guard Agency fully operational**

Five months after the European Border and Coast Guard was launched, joint investment and engagement in ensuring it becomes fully operational as quickly as possible are still needed, as a practical expression of the commitment by Member States to share responsibility and demonstrate solidarity.

The Agency is currently supporting Member States with around 1,350 border guards at different sections of the EU external border, complementing the existing national capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border guards. However, despite important deployments and contributions by Member States, there are gaps, both in terms of human resources and technical equipment. In particular, considerable gaps still exist regarding material contributions to the **Rapid Reaction Equipment pool**, deployments to ongoing joint operations and to the three new pools of forced-return monitors, forced-return escorts and return specialists. These gaps should be filled by Member States by the end of March 2017 to ensure that the Agency can provide the necessary support to Member States at the external borders. It is also necessary to carry through the vulnerability assessment process to help close potential shortcomings at the external borders before a new crisis may arise, including by prioritising the most urgent vulnerabilities.

Progress continues in other areas, with a draft **headquarters agreement** initialled with Poland and a new Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems service for **maritime surveillance** set to launch by June 2017.

## **For More Information**

[Questions and Answers](#): Commission calls for renewed efforts in implementing solidarity measures under the European Agenda on Migration

[FACTSHEET](#): Europe's Migration and Asylum Policy: Small steps to make a big difference

[FACTSHEET](#): A European Agenda on Migration – State of Play

[FACTSHEET](#): EU budget for the refugee crisis and improving migration management

## **Tenth Report on Relocation and Resettlement**

[Communication](#): Tenth Report on Relocation and Resettlement

[Annex 1](#): Relocations from Greece

[Annex 2](#): Relocations from Italy

[Annex 3](#): Relocations from Italy and Greece

[Annex 4](#): Resettlement State of Play

[FACTSHEET](#): Relocation and Resettlement

[FACTSHEET](#): Managing the refugee crisis: EU financial support to Greece

[The European Agenda on Migration](#)

## **Fifth Progress Report on the EU-Turkey Statement**

[Communication](#): Fifth Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement

[Progress on the implementation of the Joint Action Plan](#)

[First Annual Report on Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#)

[FACTSHEET](#): The Facility for Refugees in Turkey

[Operational implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement](#): Member States pledges and deployments for Frontex and EASO operations - returns and resettlements

[EU-Turkey Statement](#) of 18 March

[EU-Turkey Action Plan of 15 October](#), activated on 29 November

[Appointment of the EU Coordinator](#)

## **Second Progress Report on the operationalisation of the European Border and Coast Guard**

[Communication](#): Second Report on the operationalisation of the European Border and Coast Guard

[FACTSHEET](#): Securing Europe's External Borders: The European Border and Coast Guard

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