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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

**TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE
COUNCIL**

**Seventh Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey
Statement**

Introduction

During the period covered by this Seventh Report¹, the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016² has continued to play a key role in ensuring that the migration challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean is addressed effectively and jointly by the EU and Turkey.

Although daily arrivals have slightly increased compared to before the summer, the number of irregular crossings has remained low (at 93 per day on average since the Sixth Report). Overall, also the number of lives lost in the Aegean Sea has significantly dropped compared to the past. Arrivals through the Greece-Turkey land border have also remained at a low level.

Resettlement progressed at a steady pace, with almost 9,000 Syrians already resettled from Turkey to the EU. Both project approval and disbursements under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey ("the Facility") also continued to make progress. Currently, out of the EUR 3 billion for 2016-2017, contracts have been signed for 48 projects for a total amount of EUR 1.664 billion (up from EUR 1.572 billion) and disbursements have reached EUR 838 million (up from EUR 811 million).

However, the shortcomings identified in the previous Reports persist. In particular, the pace of returns from the Greek islands to Turkey has not improved. The number of returns remains much lower than the number of arrivals, thus continuously adding pressure on the hotspot facilities on the islands.

At the EU-Turkey High-Level Political Dialogue meeting on 25 July 2017 both sides reaffirmed their commitment to implement the EU-Turkey Statement.

The EU has remained committed to pursuing a full and non-discriminatory implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement in all its aspects and towards all Member States, as set out by the European Council of 22-23 June 2017³.

1. Current situation

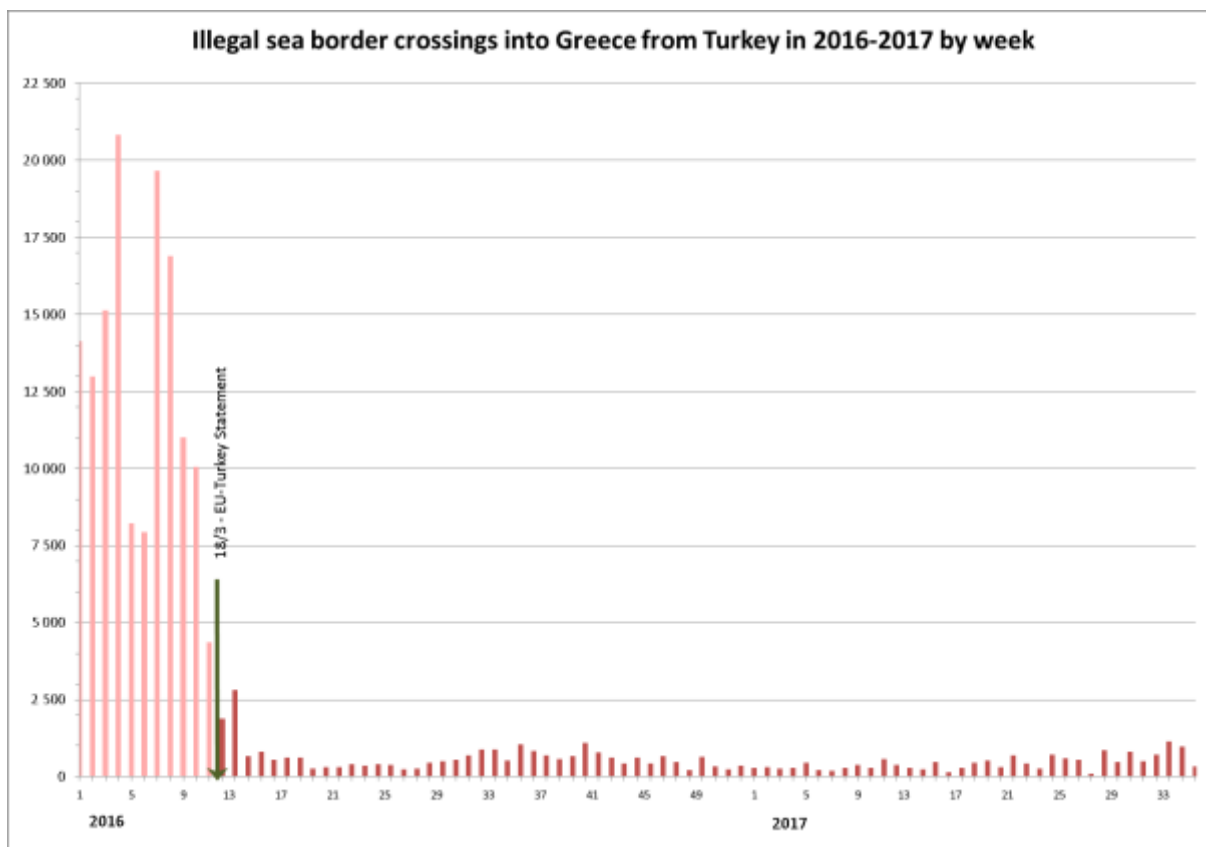
Since the Sixth Report, the total number of arrivals from Turkey to the Greek islands was 7,807 (from 9 June 2017 to 31 August 2017) – representing an average daily arrival of 93 persons. Although the number of daily arrivals is higher than before the summer, it is still substantially lower in comparison to the month that preceded the Statement. 113 fatalities and missing persons have been recorded in the Aegean Sea since the activation of the EU-Turkey Statement⁴. 1,150 people died or were reported missing during the year preceding the Statement.

¹ Following COM(2016) 231 final of 20 April 2016, COM(2016) 349 final of 15 June 2016, COM(2016) 634 final of 28 September 2016, COM(2016) 792 final of 8 December 2016, COM(2017) 204 final of 2 March 2017, and COM(2017) 323 final of 13 June 2017 ("the Sixth Report").

² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/>.

³ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2017/06/22-23-euco-conclusions_pdf/

⁴ According to the International Organisation for Migration Missing Migrants Database; period from April 2016 until 4 September 2017.



[Data cover up to 31/08/17 for week 35]

Accommodating well above three million refugees from Syria⁵, Iraq and other countries has continued to be a priority issue for the Turkish authorities, with a huge effort to ensure adequate reception and living conditions.

Enhanced coordination and cooperation

The EU Coordinator continues to work closely with all relevant partners to ensure the day-to-day follow-up to the Statement and the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement⁶. The Joint Action Plan relies on Greece's continuous efforts to ensure its implementation with the operational support of all Member States. Since the previous Report, the Commission has been supporting the Greek authorities in coordinating and managing safety and security in the islands; in upgrading reception facilities and living conditions on the islands; in accelerating the transfers of migrants referred to the regular asylum process, including vulnerable groups, to specific facilities on the mainland; in putting in place the necessary procedures allowing to reduce the second instance asylum backlog, prioritising applications of asylum seekers present in the islands; and in increasing the pre-removal and detention capacity in the hotspot islands in view of increasing the pace of returns. Particular priority continued to be placed on measures to effectively protect vulnerable groups, such as reiterating the need to appoint child protection officers in the reception facilities, including in all hotspots hosting children.

⁵ According to official Turkish data, as of 27 July 2017, Turkey had granted temporary protection to 3,106,932 Syrians.

⁶ COM(2016) 792 final of 8 December 2016. The Joint Action Plan was endorsed by the December 2016 European Council: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2016/12/20161215-euco-conclusions-final_pdf/

The effective implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement requires continuous efforts from all Member States to urgently respond to the needs identified by the European Asylum Support Office and the European Border and Coast Guard. This includes secondments for sufficiently long periods and in line with specifications provided, in particular as regards the secondment of asylum experts at the hotspot islands, including experts in vulnerability determination.

However, the shortfalls identified in the previous Reports have not been fully remedied yet.

As of 4 September, the European Asylum Support Office had deployed 98 interpreters in Greece and 96 Member State experts, all being deployed in the hotspots, out of which 84 are case workers. This means that the present shortfall is 54 experts. The European Border and Coast Guard has 888 officers deployed under the Joint Operation Poseidon, including 35 officers for the support of readmission as part of the implementation of the Statement. The shortfall is 11 experts for September, and 13 experts for October for the readmission scheme under the EU-Turkey Statement.

The pool of guest officers seconded by Member States and trained by Europol is 278. They are being deployed on a three-month rotation basis to the five Greek hotspots and to four hotspots in Italy to perform secondary security checks. 10 guest officers are currently deployed in the Greek hotspots and two Europol officials are stationed in the European Regional Task Force in Piraeus for coordination purposes.

The European Regional Task Force is an important coordination forum that bridges sea and land operations and ensures the information flow between national stakeholders and EU Agencies. Following intensified efforts since April to address cross-cutting issues in the hotspots, it has also started to invite the Greek authorities to attend its biweekly meetings.

The European Border and Coast Guard has continued to cooperate with NATO as well as with the Greek and Turkish Coast Guards. The Turkish Coast Guard has continued active patrolling and prevention of departures from Turkey.

Information initiatives

Building on the ongoing projects on Chios and Lesbos, newly established information booths in Samos and Kos have launched information provision to migrants and asylum seekers about their rights, obligations and available options, including as regards asylum or return. The Commission has been urging the Greek Reception and Identification Service to create such information booths in all hotspots, stressing their necessity.

Key challenges and next steps

- Member States shall urgently make available staff required by the European Asylum Support Office and the European Border and Coast Guard.
- The efforts to deliver the actions of the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement should be continued.

2. Return of all new irregular migrants from Greece to Turkey

The Statement provides for the return of all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers, whose applications have been declared inadmissible or unfounded, crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands after 20 March 2016. These measures are carried out strictly in accordance with the requirements of EU and international law, and in full respect of the principle of *non-refoulement*⁷.

State of play

Since the previous Report until 4 September 2017, 97 persons who arrived to Greece from Turkey have been returned under the EU-Turkey Statement, including 11 Syrians. Other nationalities included Algerians (30), Pakistanis (27), Bangladeshis (5), Iraqis (4), Moroccans (3), Cameroonians (2), Haitians (2), Iranians (2), Nigerians (2), Senegalese (2), Lebanese (1), Afghan (1), Egyptian (1), Congolese (1), Gambian (1), Ivorian (1) and Zimbabwean (1). The total number of migrants returned to Turkey since the date of the EU-Turkey Statement is 1,896⁸.

Returns from the Greek islands to Turkey remain much lower than the number of arrivals, thus continuously adding pressure on the hotspot facilities on the islands. This is the combined result of the accumulated backlog in the processing of second-instance asylum applications on the Greek islands and of the insufficient pre-return processing and detention capacity notably in Chios and Samos. The pre-removal detention capacity has increased in Lesbos and Kos. A lack of up-to-date information regarding shelter allocation complicates the identification and apprehension of migrants for whom negative second-instance asylum decisions have been issued. To this end, registration of migrants present in official accommodation on the islands are urgently needed, to be followed up with a regular monitoring of migrants' presence and asylum application status.

Since the last Report, 372 migrants have returned voluntarily to their countries of origin from the islands (as well as 929 from the mainland), with financial and/or in-kind support through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme. This brings the total to around 10,029 migrants who have used the Programme since its start in 2016. Greece should take steps to fully use and participate in EU-funded joint programmes on return (in particular the European Reintegration Network Programme) to increase its capacity through this programme, by working closely and proactively with the main implementing agencies and fully using the available support. The International Organisation for Migration continued to ensure a permanent presence in the five hotspot islands promoting the Assisted Voluntary and Reintegration Programme and providing information to individuals.

So far⁹ 57 returned non-Syrians have submitted international protection applications to the Turkish authorities: two persons have been granted refugee status, 39 applications are

⁷ Everyone who arrived in the Greek islands after 20 March 2016 has the right to apply for asylum. Each application is processed individually in light of the applicant's particular circumstances, in accordance with the Asylum Procedures Directive. This excludes any kind of collective expulsion. Applicants have the right to appeal and the right to an effective judicial remedy against any negative decision on their asylum application. Both Greece and Turkey have taken and are implementing appropriate legal steps in order to ensure full respect of EU and international law.

⁸ Since 20 March 2016, there were 1,307 returns to Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement and 589 returns under the Greece-Turkey bilateral protocol. The returned persons had either received a negative asylum decision (including negative decisions at second instance), had withdrawn their application for international protection, or had not applied for asylum in the first place.

⁹ According to the information received from the Turkish authorities.

pending, nine persons have received a negative decision¹⁰. 831 persons have been returned to their countries of origin. Until now, all returned Syrians were pre-registered for temporary protection with the exception of 16 persons who decided to return voluntarily to Syria; 19 Syrians decided to stay in the accommodation facilities provided by the Turkish authorities and 177 of them chose to live outside.

Legal steps

As regards cases on the Greek islands, the total number of appeals against the 5,225 negative first-instance decisions¹¹ so far on admissibility and on merits by the Asylum Service is 4,160¹². 2,398 second-instance decisions have so far been taken out of these 4,160 appeal cases (i.e. in 58% of the cases). Out of the 556 appeal decisions so far on admissibility, 135 second-instance appeal decisions have confirmed the first-instance inadmissibility decisions, while 421 second-instance appeal decisions have reversed the first-instance inadmissibility decisions¹³. As regards the 1,590 appeal decisions on merits, 1,560 second-instance decisions have confirmed the first-instance negative decisions and 17¹⁴ reversed such negative decisions. Moreover, 13 cases were granted subsidiary protection. During the reporting period, 252 appeal cases were closed on grounds other than a decision on the merits of the appeal, i.e. non-revoked implicit and explicit withdrawals.

The number¹⁵ of Appeal Committees and rapporteurs¹⁶ who help put together the facts of the case, the arguments of the appellant and information about his/her country of origin has not changed since the last Report. The Greek Appeal Authority has continued to improve the workflows, for example by improving the prioritisation of cases based on shelter lists provided by the Greek Registration and Identification Service in the islands, or by progressing on introducing a permanent scheduling IT tool for appointments which could also facilitate the possibility of specialising the Committees per country of origin reference files. In addition to assuring that the Appeal Authority remained properly equipped (i.e. office material and equipment), the implementation of these provisions aimed at improving the work of the Appeal Committees, and at reducing the time the appellants have to wait on the islands for a second-instance decision, i.e. granting international protection to those in need and channelling irregular migrants to the return procedure.

However, despite these efforts, the Appeal Committees have continued to be slow in decision-making (on average at around 30 per week since the previous Report). So far they have issued only 1,699 decisions in the context of the EU-Turkey Statement – 132 on admissibility and

¹⁰ In addition, seven applications are classified as "other" (withdrawn etc.).

¹¹ As of 27 August 2017, a total of 25,364 asylum applications have been submitted on the Greek islands since the Statement. Out of these 25,364 applications, the Greek Asylum Service has taken 24,048 decisions in the context of the procedures on the islands since 20 March 2016, including 17,992 on admissibility and 7,372 on merits.

¹² As of 27 August 2017.

¹³ The total figure includes second-instance decisions reversing first-instance inadmissibility decisions, as well as granting refugee status.

¹⁴ This total figure does not include second-instance decisions granting the refugee status as well as reversing first-instance inadmissibility decisions.

¹⁵ Twelve Appeal Committees currently take decisions on appeals against the first-instance decisions of the Greek Asylum Service. In addition, one Appeal Committee substitutes other Committees in case they cannot be operational (i.e. due to lack of majority of members for some reason).

¹⁶ Ten rapporteurs employed by the Appeals Authority and twelve rapporteurs deployed to the Appeals Authority by the European Asylum Support Office.

1,567¹⁷ on merits. The Greek authorities acknowledge the importance and urgency of increasing the output of the Appeal Committees and are examining possible further measures.

The decisions of the Greek Council of State Plenary on the two cases heard on 10 March 2017 concerning whether Turkey can be considered a safe third country for the return of two Syrian asylum seekers, who had appealed against the second-instance decisions confirming the first-instance inadmissibility of their cases, are still pending and no date has yet been set for their delivery.

Operational steps

According to the Greek authorities there are currently 13,372¹⁸ migrants present on the islands. The official reception capacity made available on the hotspot islands by the Greek authorities was of 5,576 places in the hotspots run by the Greek Reception and Identification Service and of 228 places for unaccompanied minors in accommodation run by the Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity, with an additional 1,031 places made available under the EU-funded rental scheme implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees¹⁹.

The Greek authorities, also with the Commission's support, continued to work towards improving conditions in the hotspots and on the islands, by upgrading the facilities and putting more efficient procedures.

The Greek Reception and Identification Service has commenced efforts to produce regular shelter allocation lists per each hotspot island. A process of data sharing of these lists between the Greek Reception and Identification Service, the Greek Asylum Service and the Appeal Committees has been put in place with the support of the Commission, facilitating the efforts of reducing backlogs in asylum processing at first and second instances. The Greek Reception and Identification Service must now ensure the regular updating of shelter allocation lists, including lists concerning camps run by municipal authorities as well as the rental scheme run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and must continue to share these lists with the authorities concerned on a regular basis.

With a view to reinforcing returns, the construction of the pre-removal centre in Kos was completed in August, extending it to its full capacity of 500 places. Works on the pre-removal detention area within the hotspot in Lesbos have been completed and the pre-removal centre has reached its full capacity of 210 places. In Samos, a Joint Ministerial Decision on contracting a pre-removal centre within the hotspot has been signed, but works have not started as the dedicated area is being used to accommodate migrants who urgently need to be transferred to another location. On Chios, no progress has been made in the development of a pre-removal centre, in particular due to local resistance.

¹⁷ Confirming the negative first-instance decisions in 1,538 cases and reversing them in 17 cases as well as granting subsidiary protection in 12 cases.

¹⁸ As of 3 September 2017. Given that there are reports that question these figures, the Commission invites the Greek authorities to clarify the number of migrants present on the islands and in the hotspots. Such clarity would help in planning and delivery.

¹⁹ Data provided by Greece's National Coordination Centre for Borders, Migration and Asylum which took over data provision regarding reception in the islands from the Hellenic Police. The National Coordination Centre for Borders, Migration and Asylum reports do not take into account the capacity of camps run by the municipalities, previously included in Hellenic Police reports, but they include information on the number of places for unaccompanied minors in accommodation run by the National Centre for Social Solidarity.

Evacuation plans have been prepared by the Hellenic Police for all hotspots and have been shared with the hotspot coordinators. Security drills were organised in all the hotspots, and evacuation exercises were successfully executed in Chios, Kos, Leros, Samos and Lesbos.

Despite steps taken, this is not enough to address the situation on the islands and therefore the Greek authorities are invited to take the necessary steps already identified in the last Report. In particular the time limit between the making and the lodging of an application should be reduced in accordance with Article 6(2) of the Asylum Procedures Directive, which requires that the Greek authorities ensure that a person making an asylum application has an effective opportunity to lodge the application as soon as possible.

EU financial assistance to Greece

Further progress has been made in ensuring a more sustainable approach towards addressing the migratory needs with the gradual transition from the Instrument for Emergency Support within the EU and emergency assistance under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund to the funding ensured through Greece's multi-annual national programmes under the latter two funds. In line with the 2017 financial planning for reception facilities for Greece, the Greek authorities have taken the necessary measures to ensure the funding through the national programmes for the provision of reception services on the islands and the operation of shelters for unaccompanied minors.

On 16 August 2017, the national programme for Greece under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund was revised to reinforce the policy priorities for integration and return with additional funds (EUR 28 million). This brings the total amount allocated to Greece's national programmes under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund to EUR 537 million available for the 2014-2020 period. In addition, substantial emergency assistance from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund, amounting to approximately EUR 371.2 million, has been provided since 2015 to help Greece reinforce its reception facilities and strengthen the country's migration, asylum and border management capacities. Such assistance includes two recent grants awarded on 6 and 31 July 2017 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in support of the Greek government and with a focus on the Eastern Aegean islands, to ensure uninterrupted provision of services while activities are transferred from emergency assistance to the national programmes for Greece under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund.

As of 4 September 2017, EUR 410.6 million of the Instrument for Emergency Support within the EU has been contracted with 15 humanitarian partners. In line with the 2017 financial planning for reception facilities for Greece, priorities of the Instrument for Emergency Support within the EU are now progressively shifting from camps to rented accommodation (for up to 30,000 people) and to extending the multi-purpose cash programme to also cover food, wherever conditions allow. For these two priorities, the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme was launched in July 2017. It consists of two contracts (worth respectively EUR 93.5 million and EUR 57.7 million) with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is already implementing the actions with partners, and in collaboration with local authorities as far as rental accommodation is concerned. EUR 34.9 million remains available until the end of the year for further needs. In

this framework, negotiations with humanitarian partners for new projects as well as further allocations to ongoing ones are being finalised.

Key challenges and next steps

- Speeding up urgently the processing of asylum applications and significantly increasing the number of decisions per Appeal Committee, prioritising the appeals lodged on the islands and stepping up the pace of returns to Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement;
- Ensuring the reception and pre-removal capacity required on all islands;
- Ensuring a timely, efficient and effective use of the EU funding available under Greece's national programmes as a matter of urgency.

3. "One for One" Resettlement from Turkey to the EU

State of play

As of 4 September, the total number of Syrians resettled from Turkey to the EU under the 1:1 framework was 8,834. In the reporting period, 2,580 Syrians have been resettled, to 15 Member States (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands²⁰). The total number of persons approved and awaiting resettlement is currently 1,831. Following a slight decrease in monthly resettlement transfers since the peak in May 2017, the sustained pace of resettlements still needs to be increased from current levels to demonstrate that an alternative legal route to the EU remains open for Syrian refugees in Turkey. This steady pace of resettlements needs to be maintained to meet the 25,000 pledges for 2017 as reported previously.

Member States continue to advance well with preparing further resettlement operations, including missions to Turkey to interview resettlement candidates. In 2017, the Turkish authorities have submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees new referral lists with almost 23,500 persons.

13 Member States have not yet resettled from Turkey²¹. However, Malta conducted its selection mission to Turkey in July, Cyprus is expected to conduct a resettlement operation in the coming weeks, Croatia has increased its pledge from 30 to 150 persons and is intending to conduct a verification mission in early October. Slovenia has approached the UNHCR submitting its request to resettle 60 persons under the EU-Turkey Statement.

Operational steps

The questionnaire, which has been developed by the EU Delegation in cooperation with Member States and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide the Syrian candidates for resettlement with comprehensive information on receiving Member States, should soon be used during the interviews with Syrian candidates to decrease the number of drop-outs.

²⁰ Additionally, since 4 April 2016 Norway has resettled 629 Syrians from Turkey.

²¹ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Key challenges and next steps

- Ensuring an adequate pace of resettlement.

4. Prevention of new sea or land routes for irregular migration

There is no evidence that efforts to control the flows on the Eastern Mediterranean route have caused any major re-routing from Turkey. However, since the Sixth Report, despite Turkey continuing Operations 'Aegean Hope' and 'Safe Med'²², from 9 June until 3 September, 23 boats, with a total of 1,363 migrants, arrived in Italy from Turkey and two boats arrived in Cyprus with a total of 228 migrants, all Syrians, on board.

The numbers of detections of irregular crossings at Turkey's land borders with Bulgaria and Greece seem to have generally remained low over the past six months: on daily average, around twelve illegal border crossings into Greece have been registered, and two into Bulgaria. However, in the last quarter, an increase of detections was registered along the border with Greece, which increased the daily average for that period to 18 and which requires continued careful monitoring. 87 officers are currently deployed at the Bulgaria-Turkey land border and 20 officers at the Greece-Turkey land border by the European Border and Coast Guard.

5. Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme

The negotiations on the Standard Operating Procedures for the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with the Participating States and with Turkey are progressing, and the objective is to have them agreed as soon as possible. Quick agreement on the Standard Operating Procedures and decision on its activation would boost the implementation of the Statement, providing Syrians with a safe and legal alternative to irregular migration to the EU.

6. Visa liberalisation

As regards the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap, there are still seven benchmarks that remain to be met as highlighted in the previous Reports:

- issuing *biometric travel documents* fully compatible with EU standards;
- adopting the measure to prevent *corruption* foreseen by the Roadmap;
- concluding an *operational cooperation agreement with Europol*;
- revising legislation and practices on *terrorism* in line with European standards;
- aligning legislation on personal *data protection* with EU standards;
- offering effective *judicial cooperation in criminal matters* to all EU Member States;
- implementing the *EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement* in all its provisions including the provision on third-country nationals that enters into force on 1 October 2017.

The Commission continues to encourage Turkey's efforts to complete the delivery of all the outstanding benchmarks of the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap as soon as possible. The

²² 2,500 staff, 65 Coast Guard boats, two rescue boats, ten helicopters and three fixed wing aircraft are deployed in these operations. According to the information shared by the Turkish authorities, so far in 2017, 9,531 irregular migrants were apprehended in the framework of Aegean Hope operation and 1,406 in the framework of the Safe-Med operation.

Commission and Turkey are engaged in a dialogue to find solutions, including the legislative and procedural changes needed on all the outstanding benchmarks.

7. Facility for Refugees in Turkey

Since the Sixth Report, the Commission has accelerated its efforts to address the most critical needs of refugees and host communities in Turkey. Of the EUR 2.9 billion allocated, contracts have been signed for 48 projects for an amount of EUR 1.664 billion (up from EUR 1.572 billion at the time of the previous Report). The total amount disbursed has reached EUR 838 million (up from EUR 811 million) for both humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance²³.

The last Steering Committee meeting on 28 June 2017 acknowledged that funding coordinated by the Facility continued to have a significant direct impact on the ground. The first monitoring findings under the Facility Results Framework were presented to the Steering Committee²⁴. The Commission is working closely with the Turkish authorities and other partners to ensure that almost EUR 1.4 billion allocated will be contracted by the end of 2017, and continues to be implemented and disbursed swiftly. In its delivery, the Facility pays particular attention to the situation of human rights of refugees overall and supports in particular women, children and disabled persons.

The Commission continued to invest into generating visibility at all levels for the Facility's support to refugees and host communities to maintain awareness and acceptance. Turkey's contribution to this effort, including through joint initiatives, will be important.

Humanitarian assistance

The delivery of the humanitarian strategy under the Facility is progressing at pace²⁵. EUR 593 million has been contracted through 35 humanitarian projects with 19 partners, covering the response to basic needs, protection, education, health, food and shelter. Out of the EUR 593 million contracted, EUR 463 million has been disbursed to date.

The number of vulnerable refugees supported by the Emergency Social Safety Net has rapidly increased to 860,000 persons²⁶. The Commission is aiming to support 1.3 million refugees through the Emergency Social Safety Net by the end of 2017. While there remain mostly registration related issues for refugees in accessing the Emergency Social Safety Net, the EU and Turkey are working together to identify solutions to ensure that all vulnerable refugees can apply.

²³ Funds will only be fully disbursed, in tranches, until the completion of the projects, in accordance with the principles of sound financial management. As part of the Facility's visibility activities, an interactive map allows direct visualisation of the location and expected results of the different projects: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/migration/index_en.htm.

²⁴ For example, as of 30 April 2017 (cut-off-date of the 1st Quarterly Reporting Cycle against the Results Framework), 19,897 Syrian refugee students had received transportation services to attend school and 580,156 primary health care consultations had been delivered. A second quarterly request for monitoring data was also launched.

²⁵ The provision of humanitarian assistance under the Facility continues to be implemented in line with EU humanitarian aid law and according to the principles laid down in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

²⁶ Following the introduction of a new transfer value and wider eligibility criteria in June, eligible families now receive 120 Turkish Lira per person per month, plus additional quarterly top-ups.

The second bi-monthly payments were made in July to refugee families under the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education project. The payments now reach over 72,000 beneficiaries, and the Commission expects 230,000 children to benefit directly in the first year of its biggest ever education in emergencies programme.

Other humanitarian projects are ongoing with the United Nations and other partners in the areas of primary health care, including physical rehabilitation and mental health, non-formal education and protection. Protection activities are notably focused on supporting refugees in registration and referring them to appropriate services provided by the Turkish government and non-governmental organisations.

The Commission is working with partners to finalise contracts under the 2017 Humanitarian Implementation Plan for Turkey in coordination with the Turkish Ministries. The implementation of EUR 714 million under the humanitarian strand of the Facility is focused on continued assistance to some of the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey and efforts to link them to government services, with the Emergency Social Safety Net remaining the primary vehicle for implementation.²⁷ The first contracts are expected to be signed shortly in September 2017.

Non-humanitarian assistance

Under the non-humanitarian strand of the Facility, EUR 1.071 billion have now been contracted and disbursements to implementing partners have reached EUR 375 million.

On 15 June 2017, a EUR 50 million project was signed with the World Bank to enhance access to short and long term employment for refugees and host communities, including financing for cash for work programmes and vocational and language training for 15,000 people in ten provinces. On 1 September 2017, a EUR 45 million project extension was signed with KfW to provide more than 40 prefabricated schools to be opened in the coming school year, in addition to the construction of solid schools already contracted.

Four Action Documents (i.e. proposals for funding under the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis ("the EU Regional Trust Fund")), worth EUR 131.5 million, were adopted following the Operational Board of the EU Regional Trust Fund on 13 June 2017. Three proposals aim to improve access to health services for Syrian refugees as well as to enhance the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities and the life skills of non-Syrian refugees. A fourth proposal specifically focuses on the empowerment of women and girls and illustrates the importance given by the Facility to gender equality and human rights in general.

On 20 July 2017, two Special Measures were adjusted to better serve the needs of refugees in Turkey. The EUR 1.415 billion Special Measure of July 2016 was modified with an increased amount of EUR 10 million and adjusted objectives to facilitate the contracting of the remaining projects with the International Financial Institutions. The adaptation allows for funding for a new hospital structure in Hatay to be implemented by the *Agence française de développement* and for the abovementioned prefabricated school buildings. Another modification made to the EUR 60 million Special Measure of April 2016 with the Turkish

²⁷ The strategy is based on three pillars: subsistence for basic needs; health services; and education support. These pillars are supported by cross-cutting protection activities.

Directorate-General for Migration Management widened the scope of support given to the Turkish authorities to strengthen their capacity to manage, receive and host migrants returned to Turkey from EU Member States.

Since the last Report, the EU has taken several measures to help cope with the pressure put on local infrastructure and services. For instance, since its official opening in May the first migrant health centre in Kilis has already shown significant results: around 15,000 Syrian patients have been examined there, including more than 600 pregnant women²⁸. A new migrant health centre should be inaugurated in Ankara in September 2017. Additional projects on health and municipal infrastructure, focusing mainly on water and sanitation, are currently under preparation targeting the provinces most affected by the crisis.

Key challenges and next steps

- Swiftly contracting all remaining actions under the Special Measures and under the 2017 Humanitarian Implementation Plan and ensuring their effective implementation in line with the principles of sound financial management.

8. Upgrading the Customs Union

At the EU-Turkey High Level Political Dialogue on 25 July 2017, both sides agreed that the modernisation of the Customs Union remains a key priority of EU-Turkey relations. The Commission therefore invites the Council to finalise its work on the Commission's proposal to open negotiations with Turkey on an upgraded bilateral trade framework²⁹. This will allow starting the negotiations on an important agreement that, applied to all Member States, would unleash still untapped potential in EU-Turkey trade and economic relations.

9. Accession process

Within the framework of accession negotiations, 16 chapters have been opened so far and one of these has been provisionally closed. No meetings took place in the reporting period.

The EU expects Turkey to respect the highest standards when it comes to democracy, rule of law, and respect of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression.

10. Humanitarian conditions inside Syria

The humanitarian situation inside Syria remains of utmost concern, with 6.3 million people being internally displaced, many of them multiple times, and 13.5 million people requiring urgent assistance. The 2017 United Nations' appeal for inside Syria amounts to EUR 3.3 billion, which today has been matched at 35%.

Violence has reportedly reduced in some areas since the creation of de-escalation zones across Syria, but the humanitarian and protection situation remains extremely difficult for civilians in many parts of the country. In north-western Syria, military operations and fighting between different armed groups have taken place in July, causing the death of civilians, and some humanitarian activities had to be temporarily suspended and a crucial border crossing point

²⁸ From May 2017 to July 2017.

²⁹ The Commission adopted its proposal for the negotiating directives in December 2016.

with Turkey was temporarily closed. Large-scale displacement continues to be recorded in Raqqa³⁰ as well as significant health needs and lack of access to safe water, food and non-food items. The humanitarian situation in areas held by non-state armed groups there remains extremely worrying, given the high level of needs. The situation seems to be deteriorating also in south-eastern Syria with an increasing number of internally displaced persons.

Access to the estimated 4.5 million people in hard-to-reach areas, including 540,000 in besieged locations, remains a key challenge, although United Nations humanitarian convoys were able to reach in July some hard-to-reach areas and the besieged town of Nashabiyeh. So far in 2017, the United Nations' assistance has reached only 13% and 39% of the people in need in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, respectively. Humanitarian actors have reported a number of obstacles³¹ to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Cross-border assistance remains increasingly important. Most of the cross-border deliveries take place from Turkey and Jordan, which continue to facilitate access by all possible routes. The EU is supporting lifesaving cross-border operations from Turkey to reach people in northern Syria through humanitarian partner organisations to provide food, water, shelter, health and protection to the population most in need. Re-registration and the regulatory environment of international non-governmental organisations in Turkey seem to have impacted their capacity to undertake aid operations inside Syria.

Given the persisting violence and immense humanitarian needs, the EU continues to urge all parties to respect obligations under international humanitarian law and to ensure that the protection of civilians is the first priority, from every possible entry point, including from Turkey and Jordan. This also applies to the concept of de-escalation zones across Syria. The EU welcomes all efforts in this regard, provided that international humanitarian law is respected.

11. Conclusion

The EU-Turkey Statement has continued to deliver concrete results in reducing irregular and dangerous crossings, lives lost in the Aegean Sea and, equally importantly, delivering practical support to Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and through resettling Syrians from Turkey safely to Europe.

However, the push factors for irregular migration to Europe remain and therefore the EU-Turkey Statement plays a key role in ensuring that the migration challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean is addressed effectively and jointly by the EU and Turkey.

To ensure the full and sustained implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement requires continuous efforts and political determination from all sides.

³⁰ Over 30,000 people have been displaced since 1 July and more than 200,000 since 1 April (Briefing of Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator to the UN Security Council (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12932.doc.htm>)).

³¹ Including the lack of administrative approvals and facilitation letters, insecurity and fighting, arbitrary restrictions by armed groups, United Nations Security Council listed terrorist groups and self-designated local authorities.

The pace of contracting and of implementation of projects under the Facility should be continuously accelerated to speed up delivery of concrete support to Syrian refugees and their host communities in Turkey.

The current pace and commitments of Member States to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey to Europe should be maintained and continued. This will be further facilitated by quickly agreeing on the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme and its activation.

To improve the situation on the Greek islands, there is an urgent need for additional significant efforts from the Greek authorities, EU Agencies and the Member States, to improve the migration and asylum management capacity of the Greek administration and to increase the return to Turkey of those persons who are not entitled to remain in Greece, in full compliance with EU and international rules.

The Commission will continue to drive the work forward and will continue to report on the progress made regularly.