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

Fifteenth report on relocation and resettlement

1 Introduction

The Fifteenth Report on Relocation and Resettlement outlines the urgent actions that still need to be taken to relocate as soon as possible all those eligible from Italy and Greece as well as to meet the resettlement objectives.

*The pace of relocation continues to show a positive trend, **with an average of 2,300 relocations per month since February 2017, confirming the significant acceleration of relocation in 2017**, with Member States relocating three and a half times more than in the same period of 2016. In total, almost 27,700 people have now been relocated as of 4 September 2017 (19,244 from Greece and 8,451 from Italy). However, after the record number of relocations in June 2017, the pace of transfers has slowed in July and August. Despite the Commission's calls to maintain and further accelerate relocation, particularly from Italy, as well as the commitment made by Ministers at the Informal Justice and Home Affairs Council on 6 July 2017 to take all steps needed to guarantee that all those eligible from Italy are relocated, only around 4,400 people were relocated from Italy and Greece (with an average of 600 people relocated per month from Italy) in the summer months.*

In Italy, where the migratory pressure remains very high, there are still a significant number of migrants eligible for relocation. So far, arrivals of Eritreans, the main nationality eligible for relocation in Italy, have been rather moderate in 2017. Over 5,600 Eritreans have arrived in Italy since the beginning of 2017, in addition to the 20,700 that arrived in 2016, and almost 2,000 Syrians that have arrived on Italian shores. As the current pace of relocation is still insufficient to relocate all those eligible, it is crucial that Member States now deliver on their commitments and legal obligations and significantly step up their relocation efforts from Italy. This would help to alleviate the pressure on the strained Italian asylum and reception systems.

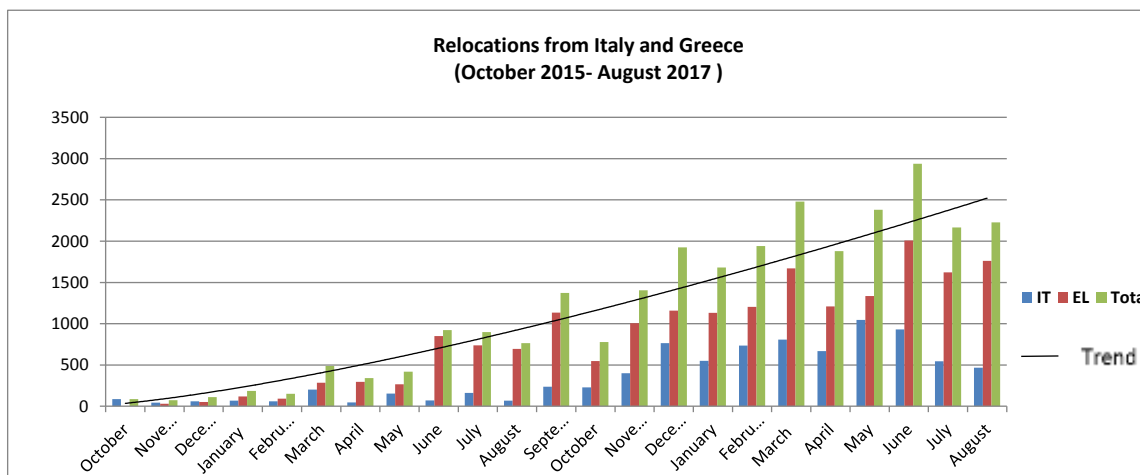
As regards Greece, relocation transfers stabilised in the summer months at 1,700. However, a further effort is still needed to relocate all eligible applicants. As of 4 September, 27,382 people were registered for relocation and at least 2,800 people still need to be relocated. Member States should continue their efforts to ensure that all eligible migrants are effectively relocated.

Progress in the implementation of the July 2015 Council Conclusions¹ to resettle 22,504 people continues. A number of Member States with large commitments have fulfilled their commitments and are focusing their efforts on resettlement under the EU-Turkey Statement. Member States that have not yet resettled or are far from reaching their target should immediately step up their efforts.

¹ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11130-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

2 Relocation

The pace of relocation shows a continuous positive upward trend with an average of 2,300 relocations per month since February 2017. The majority of Member States are pledging and relocating on a regular basis. However, additional efforts from all Member States of relocation are needed to ensure relocation of all those eligible in Italy and Greece.



Those Member States that have not used their relocation allocation in full should increase their pledges and accelerate the transfers of their backlog. All Member States should continue to follow up on their obligations in order to relocate all eligible applicants from both Italy and Greece.

As reported earlier, Hungary and Poland remain the only Member States that have not relocated a single person and Poland has not made any pledge since 16 December 2015. Moreover, the **Czech Republic** has not pledged since May 2016 and has not relocated anyone since August 2016. **These countries should start pledging and relocating immediately.**

2.1 Greece: additional efforts needed to relocate all eligible applicants

As of 4 September, in total 27,382 people have lodged their applications under the relocation scheme; 19,244 people have been already relocated while 2,741 still need to be relocated.² Although more applicants for relocation might still be registered before 26 September 2017 and some might be excluded from the relocation scheme, the total number of persons registered for relocation is expected to remain stable. In particular, between 1,500 and 2,000 persons who have been initially channelled to the Dublin procedure may fall back into

² 2,765 candidates for relocation have been rejected by the Member States of relocation, were channelled to the Dublin procedure or to the national Greek procedure or, a very limited number, passed away; and 2,632 registered applications were in the end not offered to the Member States by the Greek Asylum Service, because they were mostly transferred to Dublin procedures, or otherwise found to be ineligible, while some applications have not yet been submitted to the Member States.

relocation, bringing the total potential of people still to be relocated to around 4,700.³ For this reason, it is crucial that Member States continue pledging regularly.

As previously reported, **Malta and Latvia** have already relocated their full allocation⁴ and **Norway** fulfilled its commitment as well. In addition, with the relocation transfers implemented and planned for September, **Finland will have relocated more than 90% of its allocation, and Lithuania and Luxembourg** will have relocated more than 85% of theirs. In addition, **Sweden**, which only started relocating in June, will have relocated almost 70% of its allocation. However, despite announcing its intention to start relocating from Greece, **Austria** is yet to officially pledge and the Commission expects Austria to do so as matter of priority.

In August, relocations reached almost 1,800 persons. The main bottleneck in the final phase of the implementation of the scheme has been the lack of capacity of some Member States of relocation to process relocation requests at the same pace as the monthly pledges as well as limited reception capacity. As mentioned before, the main consequences of the lack of processing capacity has been delays in replies as well as the inability to carry out checks by national security services, particularly when the countries carry out resettlement and relocation at the same time.

To relocate all those eligible as soon as possible, countries with the biggest number of pending cases (**Germany, France, Ireland and Switzerland**) should urgently accelerate the transfers.

Unaccompanied minors: good progress continues

As of 31 August, 420 unaccompanied minors have been relocated out of the 586 unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation. The same Member States (**Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain**) continue offering places for this category of vulnerable applicants, and the Commission welcomes this. However, it is crucial that **all Member States** accept relocation requests for this particularly vulnerable group. **Member States are encouraged to continue providing places as needed⁵ to relocate the registered separated minors and avoid too restrictive policies with regard to the proof of family links.** It is the Best Interests of Child Assessment that determines first, if the minor should be relocated, and second to which Member State.

Urgent actions needed:

- **All Member States should continue pledging as needed** to ensure that all eligible applicants will be relocated. In particular Member States that have not used their allocation in full should increase their pledges and accelerate relocations of all eligible applicants.

³ Between March 2017 and 16 August 2017, 219 applicants for international protection have been re-directed to the relocation programme by the Greek Dublin Unit.

⁴ Excluding the specific allocation under the remaining 54,000.

⁵ Although, in principle, no additional pledges are required, the need for further pledges may increase if some of the Dublin requests for unaccompanied minors sent to other Member States are rejected.

- **Austria** should follow up on its announcement and start pledging and relocating from Greece immediately;
- **In this final stage of implementation, Germany, France, Ireland and Switzerland should further increase their efforts** to accelerate the transfers;
- **Member States should show flexibility in relocating separated and unaccompanied minors.**

2.2 Italy: more efforts needed to relocate all eligible applicants

With the current pace (only 544 applicants relocated in July and 467 in August), it is clear that more must be done on both fronts: to identify and register all those eligible arriving in 2017 (Italy) and relocate them swiftly (Member States of relocation).

Identification and registration for relocation of applicants who arrived in 2017: further acceleration is needed to allow for relocation of all eligible applicants

In addition to the 20,700 applicants who arrived in Italy in 2016, around 7,600 eligible applicants (mainly Eritreans and Syrians) arrived in Italy so far in 2017, of which only around 4,000 were registered for relocation in 2017 and around 11,000 in total since the beginning of the scheme. Such pace in the identification, registration and processing of the cases of Eritreans, however, does not match the pace of arrivals of eligible applicants in Italy. In that respect, **Italy must increase, as a matter of priority, the identification and registration of all arriving eligible applicants as well as the pace of case processing** so the relocation requests can be submitted to the Member States of relocation faster and as soon as a pledge is made by the Member States.

To this end, Italy supported by EASO must increase awareness about the relocation scheme among the local authorities and in the reception centres including by ensuring that potential candidates who are currently outside Italy's formal reception system are also swiftly registered and included in the relocation scheme. The EASO information campaign and the EASO relocation hotline should be used to the extent possible. For this to happen, closer cooperation between the Italian authorities and EASO is crucial. EASO is also ready to further increase the number and active presence of its mobile teams to reach out to potential eligible applicants who have not been yet registered for relocation and facilitate their registration into the scheme and their processing. Following the letter from Prime Minister Gentiloni to President Juncker, First Vice President Timmermans and Commissioner Avramopoulos of 14 August, cooperation with EASO should be further intensified.

Pledges and relocations: Member States should speed up all stages of the procedure while more pledges are needed to allow for swift relocations of all eligible applicants

The Commission welcomes the relocation of first 15 applicants from Italy to **Austria** and the recent increased pledge made by **France** and **Spain**, which should now translate into effective relocations. The first cases to be relocated from Italy to **Slovakia** are being processed and the Commission expects that the first transfers will happen without delay. **Germany** and **Switzerland** should continue reducing the delays given that some relocation requests are pending since last year.

Moreover following the invitation made by Italy, the outstanding bilateral arrangements concerning additional security interviews should be concluded with the **Member States concerned** as soon as possible, so that relocation to those Member States can start immediately. In this regard, the Commission welcomes the recent pledge made by **Estonia** and expects that the first transfers will follow shortly.

As mentioned in the previous report, persons arriving until 26 September 2017⁶ can still be relocated within a reasonable time thereafter⁷, provided they meet the eligibility requirements. This requires that the Member States continue pledging additional places as needed so that Italy can be sending relocation requests also after this date and as soon as the eligible applicants are registered and their cases ready. While providing sufficient pledges, Member States (notably **Estonia** and **Slovakia**) should avoid over-restrictive preferences which are almost impossible for Italy to meet. Moreover, for a smooth and efficient implementation of the final stage of the relocation scheme **advanced planning and coordination** of Member States with large monthly pledges will be crucial.

Relocation of unaccompanied minors

Since the first relocation of unaccompanied minors from Italy in May 2017, 31 unaccompanied minors have been relocated from Italy - 26 to the **Netherlands**, 2 to **Belgium**, 2 to **Norway** and 1 to **Germany**. Moreover, there is another case accepted, 59 more cases for which requests have been sent to Member States and more than 80 additional cases ready for submission, while even more cases are being prepared.

The positive developments are the result of a coordinated action of the Commission's team in Italy, the Italian authorities⁸ as well as EASO. A two-page, step-by-step summary explaining the relocation procedure for unaccompanied minors was sent to Prefectures and Questure in Sicily. In addition, an EASO roving team was deployed in the Sicilian Questure. This team took up its work in mid-August facilitating registrations of unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation.

As the overall pace of registration of unaccompanied minors for relocation increases, it is expected that a significant number of unaccompanied minors will be registered in the coming weeks. It therefore remains crucial that both the Italian authorities and Member States continue to treat requests about vulnerable cases and unaccompanied minors with an absolute priority. Moreover, strict preferences with regard to unaccompanied minors should be discontinued by some Member States (**Germany**). Registering and relocating unaccompanied minors who arrived to Italy by 26 September soon after their arrival can only be achieved with the complete support of all Member States in the coming weeks, including through increased pledges for unaccompanied minors.

⁶ The end date of the respective Council Decisions on relocation.

⁷ Within the time limits provided in Article 5 of the Council Decisions on relocation.

⁸ Italian Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice and local authorities, especially in Sicily and in Rome.

Urgent actions needed:

- **Italy** must accelerate the identification and registration of all arriving eligible applicants, including through the EASO information campaign, as well as the pace of processing of the relocation cases;
- First relocations to **Slovakia** and **Estonia** should be implemented without delay and **Germany and Switzerland** should continue their efforts in replying to pending relocation requests respecting the deadlines agreed in the relocation protocol;
- **Since only Malta and Finland are close to relocate their entire allocation for Italy, all other Member States** should **continue pledging** or, if necessary, increase their pledges to relocate all eligible applicants;
- Some Member States (**Estonia, France, Slovakia**) should avoid too restrictive preferences, while Member States with large allocations should provide advanced planning and show flexibility concerning the logistics around transfers;
- All Member States should give priority to applications concerning **vulnerable applicants**, in particular **unaccompanied minors**, avoiding strict preferences (**Germany**), and continue making available sufficient places for them in their pledges.

3 Resettlement

The implementation of the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 is progressing. Of the 22,504 resettlements agreed under the Conclusions, over 75% have already been completed. Efforts continue to be mainly directed at resettlements from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. This is because a number of States with large quotas have already fulfilled their resettlement commitment under the Conclusions or are very close to fulfilling them. Nevertheless, resettlement from other countries, mainly Jordan and Lebanon, still continues.

As of 4 September 2017, 17,305 people have been resettled to 22 States (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) under the 20 July 2015 Conclusions. This includes efforts from Member States to resettle Syrians from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement. Since 4 April 2016, 8,834 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under this scheme, including 1,028 Syrians since the last reporting period. The remaining number of all pledges now stands at 20,687 Syrians. Resettlement under the EU-Turkey Statement has so far taken place to Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Sweden. Additionally, Norway has so far resettled 629 Syrians from Turkey since 4 April 2016. **The total number of people resettled under both EU schemes since their launch is 22,518.**

Seven Member States (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) as well as three Associated Countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) have already fulfilled their pledges under the 20 July 2015 Conclusions. Nine Member States have however not yet resettled under this scheme⁹ and 13 Member States have

⁹ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

not resettled under the EU-Turkey Statement.¹⁰ Nevertheless, some of these Member States are preparing to resettle under the schemes. Malta conducted its selection mission to Turkey in July and Cyprus is expected to conduct a resettlement operation under the EU-Turkey Statement in the coming weeks. Furthermore, Croatia has increased its pledge under the EU-Turkey Statement from 30 to 150 persons, and it is intending to conduct a verification mission in Turkey in early October. Slovenia has approached UNHCR submitting its request to resettle 60 persons under the EU-Turkey Statement. Member States with large gaps between their commitments made under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 and actual implementation are unlikely to fulfil their commitments unless they significantly increase their efforts.

The Member States resettling under the EU-Turkey Statement are preparing further operations, including missions to Turkey to interview resettlement candidates. The EU Delegation in Ankara continues to underline to UNHCR the importance of sending new submissions of candidates also to Member States with smaller pledges.

In parallel to the implementation of the current resettlement commitments from Turkey, 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.

In order to ensure continuous EU funding support for resettlement, the Commission at the 8th Resettlement and Relocation Forum on 4 July invited Member States to submit by 15 September 2017 **new resettlement pledges** covering the year 2018. This funding exercise is part of the regular pledging which enables Member States to benefit from the EU funding support to their resettlement efforts. It represents the continuation of a coordinated EU-level approach to resettlement and builds towards the future Union Resettlement Framework. Resettlement of Syrians and other third country nationals displaced by the conflict in Syria from Turkey remains the main priority. At the same time given other humanitarian, protection, and migration management considerations, Member States are further invited to resettle people in need of international protection from Lebanon and Jordan as well as North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

In line with the Action Plan of 4 July¹¹ and with a view to saving lives, reducing migratory pressure on Libya, and providing alternatives to irregular onward movements towards the EU, Member States were specifically invited to focus on at least limited resettlement of the most vulnerable people from Libya, Egypt, Niger, Ethiopia and Sudan. For the time being, the total amount earmarked for resettlement in 2018 is EUR 377.5 million which can support the resettlement of at least 37,750 people in need of international protection.

The Commission on 25 August in a letter to all Interior Ministers followed-up on this invitation and called on all Member States to be as ambitious as possible and increase resettlement efforts from Egypt, Libya, Niger, Ethiopia and Sudan, to contribute to the

¹⁰ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

¹¹ SEC(2017) 339.

stabilisation of the challenging situation in the central Mediterranean and our common efforts to save lives and offer alternatives to irregular movements, in addition and while ensuring continued resettlement from Turkey and the Middle East. The Commission is looking forward to receiving the Member States' pledges and stands ready to support them financially and practically.

Recommendations:

- Member States which have not yet resettled under the Council Conclusions of 20 July 2015 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and those who have not reported any progress (the Czech Republic and Denmark) should immediately step up their efforts to reach their commitments. Croatia, Cyprus, Malta and Slovenia are encouraged to continue their efforts to implement planned resettlements;
- Member States are invited to further increase their overall efforts demonstrated over the past two years and submit to the Commission by 15 September 2017 **ambitious** pledges for resettlement in 2018.

4 Way forward

There are still eligible applicants to be relocated both from Greece and Italy to the other Member States. Moreover, new eligible applicants are arriving to Italy every day and increased support to Italy is needed in order to alleviate the current migratory pressure. Furthermore, new eligible applicants are identified by Greece and continuing relocation pledges by Member States are therefore still required.

The Commission welcomes the ruling of 6 September 2017 in which the Court confirmed the validity of the second Council Decision on relocation and dismissed the actions brought by Slovakia and Hungary. The Council Decisions apply to all eligible applicants arriving in the territory of Italy and Greece until 26 September 2017. Therefore, persons who arrived up to that date and meet all the requirements in the Council Decisions, are eligible for relocation and should be transferred to other Member States within a reasonable period of time thereafter. Therefore, it is crucial that all Member States, in particular Poland, Hungary and, the Czech Republic as well as those that have not used-up their allocation in full, step-up their efforts to relocate all eligible applicants from both Greece and Italy. This is particularly important for Italy where a significant number of applicants eligible for relocation have arrived since the beginning of 2017 and more could potentially arrive by 26 September. Member States should therefore continue providing pledges both for Italy and Greece as needed. The Commission will continue providing the financial support for the relocation of all those eligible, as established in the Council Decisions

In parallel, Member States should also immediately step up efforts to deliver on their resettlement commitments, in particular those which have not yet resettled anyone or those which are still well below their set target.

While all stakeholders should focus on the full implementation of the current emergency relocation and resettlement schemes, in parallel, in line with the conclusions of the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs ministers on 6 July, there is a need to continue to work with the utmost priority on the package of legislative proposals for the reform of the Common

European Asylum System, including a reform of the Dublin Regulation based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility.