



Commissioner Avramopoulos and Minister Asselborn in Athens: First Relocation Flight from Greece

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On Wednesday 4 November, Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos and Luxembourg Minister for Foreign Affairs Jean Asselborn will travel to Greece. Together with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, European Parliament President Martin Schulz and Greek Alternate Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction responsible for Migration Policy Ioannis Mouzalas they will meet with the first group of asylum seekers to benefit from the EU's relocation scheme from Greece. Thirty asylum seekers will travel by plane from the Athens International Airport to have their applications processed in Luxembourg.

Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Avramopoulos said: *"Tomorrow the first flight will leave Greece under the EU's relocation scheme. More than 600,000 people have entered the EU through Greece so far this year. Today's relocation is a symbolic moment, but it is also a crucial first step in a process that has to become systematic. It is now time to step up a gear, to have all hotspots fully functioning, and to make relocation a regular occurrence. We commend Luxembourg for being the first Member State to relocate people from Greece, as well as for their political efforts as Council Presidency to get this scheme started. We are counting on all Member States to take the necessary steps so that more relocations can follow swiftly from Greece and Italy."*

Tomorrow's first flight from Greece is the result of intensive preparatory work on the ground by the Greek and Luxembourgish authorities, Frontex, EASO, Europol, Eurojust, IOM, UNHCR and local NGOs, and by the special envoys which the European Commission has deployed on the ground to make sure that the decisions on relocation adopted by the Council are implemented in Greece.

Commissioner Avramopoulos and Minister Asselborn will join Prime Minister Tsipras, President Schulz and Alternate Minister Mouzalas in greeting the asylum seekers at 05h45CET at Athens International Airport, before the departure of their flight. This will be followed by a press conference at 06h30CET. The press conference will be broadcast live by Ebs.

For more information on the press conference, journalists should contact the Commission Representation in Athens.

Background:

The Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council on 14 September adopted the Decision to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece, and the Extraordinary Home Affairs Council on 22 September agreed on the relocation of an additional 120,000 asylum seekers from Member States directly affected by the crisis.

Under the relocation scheme, asylum seekers with a high chance of having their applications successfully processed^[1] will be relocated from Greece and Italy, where they have arrived, to other Member States where they will have their asylum applications processed. If these applications are successful, the applicants will be granted refugee status with the right to reside in the Member State to which they are relocated.

The relocations will take place over two years, with the EU budget providing dedicated funding of €780 million to support this scheme. Beneficiary Member States of relocation will get €6000 per relocated person, including a 50% pre-financing rate to ensure that national authorities have the means to act very swiftly. Countries benefitting from the relocation will receive €500 for each person relocated, to cover transport costs to the Member States of relocation.

The first relocation flight under the new scheme took place on 9 October when 19 Eritrean asylum seekers were relocated from Italy to Sweden. On 21 October, an additional 19 Eritrean and Syrian asylum seekers were relocated from Italy to Sweden and 48 to Finland. A total of 86 asylum seekers have so far been relocated from Italy under the new scheme.

For more information:

European Commission Statement following the decision at the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council to relocate 120,000 refugees: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-5697_en.htm

Memo – Q&A on Emergency Relocation: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5698_en.htm

Press Release - Managing the refugee crisis: Immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5700_en.htm

Factsheet – A European Refugee Relocation System: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/publications/index_en.htm#0801262490bfbb48/c

Factsheet – The 'Hotspot' Approach: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/publications/index_en.htm#0801262490bfbb7f/c

All press materials on the EU Migration Agenda: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/index_en.htm

[1] Eritreans, Iraqis and Syrians, who currently have a more than 75% success rate in their asylum applications

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Press contacts:

[Tove ERNST](#) (+32 2 298 67 64)

[Tim McPHIE](#) (+ 32 2 295 86 02)

[Anna EFSTATHIOU, Press Officer, Athens](#) (+30 210-7272000)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)