

Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS

Member of the European Commission

Brussels, 15. 07. 2015
Ares (2015)

Dear Ministers,

The European Commission is committed to spare no efforts in taking forward its work on migration, in all its dimensions, and in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility. After the adoption of the European Agenda on Migration on 13 May 2015, the Commission presented a first implementation package on 27 May 2015. With that package, we made quick progress on the immediate actions identified in the Agenda by reinforcing the Union's presence in the Mediterranean, by putting forward an EU Action plan against migrant smuggling, and by presenting a recommendation for European scheme for resettlement and a proposal for relocation of persons in clear need of international protection. Ahead of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 15-16 June 2015, I also sent you a letter outlining the Commission's ideas for strengthening our return policy and capabilities.

In June, the European Council concluded that work should be taken forward on all dimensions of a comprehensive and systemic approach. On that occasion, the European Council tasked the Commission with a number of actions concerning the "Hotspot" approach, the role of Frontex in return operations, and the concept of "safe country of origin", all to be taken by July 2015. Today, I am honoured to present to you our work, carried out with the support of the relevant EU Agencies, on all three of these actions.

First, we are presenting an explanatory note which elaborates the concept of the "Hotspot" approach. The aim of the "Hotspot" approach is to provide comprehensive and targeted support by the EU Agencies to frontline Member States which are faced with disproportionate migratory pressures at the external borders. The first annex dealing with the "Hotspot" approach includes two roadmaps and a flowchart setting out the way in which this approach is implemented in practice in Italy and in Greece, taking into account legal, financial and operational aspects. The explanatory note and the roadmaps have been prepared in close collaboration with the EU Agencies and with the host Member States, in this case, Italy and Greece, in order to apply this approach in a tailor-made way taking into account the specificity of each Member State.

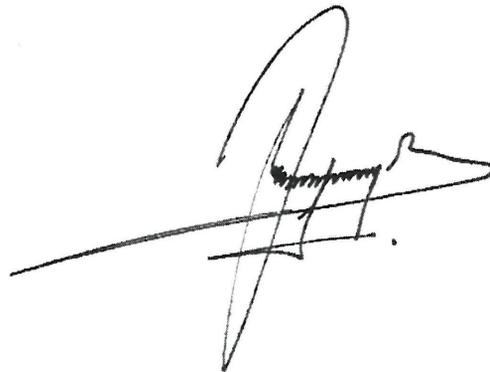
The second annex sets out how Frontex will be able to bring immediate support to frontline Member States on return. Swift return to their home countries, in full respect of their fundamental rights, of those persons who do not qualify for protection is essential for the effectiveness and credibility of our migration policy.

Frontex will provide prompt support for the identification of irregular migrants, the acquisition of travel document for their return, as well as carrying out return operations to bring them back to their home countries. The role of Frontex in return operations is further elaborated in the annexed information note.

The third annex deals with the concept of "safe country of origin". In an effort to accelerate the treatment of asylum applications, immediate steps have been taken to ensure a common approach to the application of the "safe country of origin" concept. The Commission and EASO organised a meeting with the Member States on 8 July 2015, where the Commission presented a roadmap of short-term measures to be taken by EASO in order to coordinate the implementation by Member States of the applicable provisions of the Asylum Procedures Directive. In addition, based on experiences reached in the short term, the Commission would propose, in the medium term, to strengthen the "safe country of origin" provisions in the Asylum Procedures Directive, including the possible establishment of a common EU list of "safe countries of origin". The work on the concept of "safe country of origin" is further elaborated in the annexed information note.

I look forward to continuing working with you on all dimensions of a comprehensive and systemic approach to address the challenges deriving from migration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dimitris Avramopoulos', written over a horizontal line.

Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS

Annexes:

- Annex I: Explanatory note on the "Hotspot" approach
- Annex II: Information note on the support to be provided by Frontex to frontline Member States on the return of irregular migrants
- Annex III: Information note on the follow-up to the European Council Conclusions of 26 June 2015 on "safe countries of origin"