

MEPs approve first emergency rules for distributing asylum seekers in the EU

Plenary sessions [09-09-2015 - 15:17]

Parliament backed temporary emergency rules to relocate an initial total of 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other EU member states over two years in a vote on Wednesday. In the migration debate on Wednesday, most MEPs welcomed the Commission's new proposals outlined by Juncker in his state of the Union speech, stressing that more contributions to solidarity will be needed.

"We have a humanitarian crisis and we need to act on it now. Relocating 40,000 refugees is just the start. Let this measure be the start of a rights-based, a fair and a common asylum policy, in solidarity with all member states and in solidarity with the refugees," said Parliament's rapporteur, Ska Keller (Greens/EFA, DE), in the debate on Tuesday.

Ms Keller also stressed the need for a "permanent distribution key in case there is an emergency. We must be able to decide and move forward if we have that emergency, and we should not be blocked by several member states." The future proposal for a permanent scheme should provide for a mandatory and automatically triggered relocation system.

The legislative resolution on the emergency relocation of the initial 40.000 asylum seekers was approved by 498 votes to 158, with 37 abstentions.

More solidarity will be needed

To relieve the significant asylum pressure from Italy and Greece, "but also to act as an important test case with a view to the upcoming legislative proposal on a permanent emergency relocation scheme", Parliament agrees that "an initial total of 40,000 applicants shall be relocated from Italy and Greece" over two years (24,000 from Italy and 16,000 from Greece).

To adapt to rapidly changing refugee flows and trends, "a further increase shall be considered" in the course of the application of these emergency measures (i.e. during the two-year period), MEPs add.

A separate proposal for a permanent emergency relocation scheme must also be based "on a more substantial contribution to solidarity and responsibility-sharing among member states, including a significant increase in the number of available relocation places", MEPs stress. It should be built on clearly defined criteria, allowing it to be triggered "on the basis of transparent and objective indicators".

Taking asylum seekers' preferences into account

The EP proposes that asylum seekers should be given the possibility, before they are relocated from Italy and Greece, to rank member states by order of preference, according to criteria such as family ties, social ties and cultural ties, for example language skills, previous stays, studies and work experience.

"While applicants do not have a right to choose the member state of their relocation, their needs, preferences and specific qualifications should be taken into account to the extent possible," says Parliament, since this could facilitate their integration into a particular EU

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country. Parliament also stresses that special attention should be given to unaccompanied minors.

Next steps

Parliament has stated its position today, under the consultation procedure (under Article 78(3) of the Treaty), on the temporary emergency rules for the relocation of the 40,000 asylum seekers initially proposed by the Commission on 27 May. It will be consulted in the coming months on the additional figure of 120,000 to be relocated under the second emergency relocation proposal announced today.

EU interior ministers agreed on 20 July, as a first step, to the relocation of 32,256 persons and to update the figures by December with a view to reaching the overall number of 40,000 (see [table showing the distribution of the 32,256 asylum seekers between member states](#)). A further Council meeting is scheduled for 14 September.

Once it has been formally adopted by the Council, the decision will enter into force on the day after its publication in the EU Official Journal. The member states participating in the relocation scheme will receive a lump sum of €6 000 for each relocated person.

When a permanent relocation system is proposed – which Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced in his State of the Union address on Wednesday morning, – Parliament will decide on it jointly with the Council (EU member states) under the codecision procedure.

Note for editors

This proposal for a decision concerns the "relocation" scheme for transferring asylum seekers from one EU member state to another, i.e. distributing them within the EU. The 20,000 refugees who are outside the EU and who are to be "resettled" in member states are covered by a separate Commission recommendation.

Procedure: Consultation

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 09.09.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate in plenary (click on 08.09.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary>
- Audiovisual material: EP multimedia package on migration and asylum
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2297>
- Outcome of the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on 20.07.2015 (table with the distribution of the initial 32,256 asylum seekers per member state)
: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2015/07/st11097_en15_pdf/
- EP Policy Department Study "Enhancing the Common European Asylum System and alternatives to Dublin"
:
: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519234/IPOL_STU%282015%29519234_EN.pdf
- Spring 2015 Standard Eurobarometer: Citizens see immigration as top challenge for EU to tackle (31.07.2015)
: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5451_en.htm
- Number of migrants in one month (July 2015) above 100.000 for first time (Frontex)
: <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/number-of-migrants-in-one-month-above-100-000-for-first-time-I9MIlo>

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- Asylum in the EU in the first quarter 2015 (Eurostat)

: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6887997/3-18062015-CP-EN.pdf/4457b050-26f9-4cf1-bf27-9ffb73ff8c7b>

Political groups

- Press releases by the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press>
- Press releases by the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom>
- Press releases by the ECR group: <http://ecrgroup.eu/news/>
- Press releases by the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/press/press-and-release-news/>
- Press releases by the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/archives/category/gue-ngl-news>
- Press releases by the Greens/EFA group: <http://www.greens-efa.eu/press/70-press-releases.html>
- Press releases by the EFDD group: <http://www.efdgroup.eu/newsroom/press-releases>

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