



## **Statement of the European Commission following the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council**

Brussels, 14 September 2015

**Today we have taken a first step forward as a Union on the refugee crisis. However, this is only the beginning and more must be done to cope with the enormous challenges Europe and its citizens are facing at the moment.**

Interior Ministers meeting for an Extraordinary Council today offered their support for the [comprehensive agenda the Commission](#) put forth in May and September to address the refugee crisis. Member States have agreed to express their solidarity with one another by deciding to relocate throughout the EU 40,000 refugees, based on the European [Commission's first emergency relocation proposal of 27 May](#). An operational meeting will be organised this week to start implementing the relocation decision on the 40,000 in the shortest possible timeframe.

The European Commission also appreciates the willingness of the majority of Member States to move forward as soon as possible towards an agreement on relocating another 120,000 people in clear need of international protection, [as proposed by the European Commission on 9 September](#).

We welcome the Council's decision to significantly and immediately increase the EU's financial support to Syria and its neighbouring countries. There is no solution to the refugee crisis without dealing with its root causes.

Solidarity must also go hand in hand with responsibility. We welcome therefore the commitment to reach an agreement on the Safe Countries of Origin list in October and on the immediate and continued rolling out of the Hotspot approach in the Member States most directly concerned. The Commission will play its role in ensuring their proper implementation on the ground.

The European Union can only function if everyone plays by the rules. The Schengen system and all its benefits can only be preserved if EU Member States work together swiftly, responsibly and with solidarity in managing the refugee crisis. We must keep the borders between EU Member States open, but at the same time we also need stronger joint efforts to secure our external borders.

We called for a strong effort in European solidarity when presenting the Commission's proposals to the European Parliament on 9 September and when President Juncker spoke to Heads of State and Government over the past days. The Commission will continue to work in close cooperation with the European Parliament, the Council, the 28 EU Member States and Schengen Associated States. We need swift progress and the operational implementation of our joint decisions so that we can make a difference on the ground as soon as possible. We would like to thank the European Parliament in particular for their response last week to our first emergency relocation scheme which paved the way for the first refugees to be relocated from Italy and Greece without delay.

We now need to see the same sense of responsibility and urgency on the new emergency measures we proposed last week. More ambition is needed to respond to the magnitude of the challenge that Europe is facing. We need to come to a more fundamental change of the current system to better combine responsibility, solidarity and effective management within a truly European Asylum and Migration Policy.

The world is watching us. Now is the time for each and every one to take responsibility.

### **Background:**

The European Commission has been consistently and continuously working for a coordinated European response on the refugees and migration front:

On 23 April 2014, in Malta, Jean-Claude Juncker presented [a five point plan on immigration](#), calling for more solidarity in the EU's migration policy as part of his campaign to become European Commission President.

Based on a [proposal by the European Commission](#), in a [European Council statement](#) of 23 April 2015, Member States committed to taking rapid action to save lives and to step up EU action in the field of migration. A [European Parliament Resolution](#) followed a few days later.

On 13 May 2015, the European Commission presented its [European Agenda on Migration](#), setting out a comprehensive approach for improving the management of migration in all its aspects.

On 27 May 2015, the European Commission already came forward with a [first package of implementing measures](#) of the European Agenda on Migration, including relocation and resettlement proposals, and an EU Action plan against migrant smugglers.

On 25-26 June 2015, the [European Council](#) agreed to move forward on the proposals made by the European Commission in the European Agenda on Migration, focusing on relocation and resettlement, returns and cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

On 20 July 2015, the [Justice and Home Affairs Council](#) agreed to implement the measures as proposed in the European Agenda on Migration, notably to relocate people in clear need of international protection from Italy and Greece over the next two years, starting with 32,256 in a first step, and to resettle 22,504 displaced persons in clear need of international protection from outside the EU.

On 9 September 2015, the Commission proposed [a new set of measures](#), including an emergency relocation mechanism for 120,000 refugees, as well as concrete tools to assist Member States in processing applications, returning economic migrants, and tackling the root causes of the refugee crisis.

At today's Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council, the Commission was represented by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, in charge of Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship. The High Representative Federica Mogherini also attended the meeting.

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