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ANNEX 2

**ANNEX**

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

**Progress report on the European Agenda on Migration**

**Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement**

{SWD(2017) 372 final}

Priority actions	State of Play <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>Increase the deployment of asylum processing staff at the islands</b></p>	<p>As of 12 November, <b>EASO</b> deploys 232 persons, including 107 Member States experts as case workers, vulnerability experts and experts on information provision, 17 EASO staff and 25 EASO interim staff,, as well as 83 interpreters at the Reception and Identification Centres on the islands. 15 additional interim case-workers have been recently recruited by EASO. They are currently following a dedicated training and will be operational and deployed shortly. EASO informs the Member States on a regular basis of specific profiles and needs for experts in the Reception and Identification Centres. Information packages describing profiles required and providing pre-deployment information per island are available.</p> <p><b>Greek Asylum Service:</b> 101 personnel are active at the hotspots as of early November.</p>
<p><b>Processing the Dublin family reunification cases</b></p>	<p>The <b>adoption of a provision allowing asylum seekers applying for family reunification</b> under the Dublin III Regulation not to be exempted of the border procedure, remains pending at the EL Parliament.</p> <p>The Greek Asylum Service is analysing information collected by EASO from 15 Member States, regarding procedures that apply to family reunification from Turkey; relevant guidelines are under preparation.</p>
<p><b>Processing the vulnerability cases</b></p>	<p>The Greek Asylum Service considers that <b>vulnerable groups should be exempted from the border procedure, so as to</b> ensure sufficient special procedural guarantees (e.g. objective inadequacy of medical and psychiatric services) for the vulnerable groups.</p> <p>It is however very important to guarantee an objective vulnerability assessment. This is why a <b>new medical vulnerability template</b> should be implemented shortly at the Reception and Identification Centres, in the interests of standardized and objective vulnerability detection. Moreover, the Greek authorities need to ensure the permanent presence of a sufficient number of adequately trained medical doctors and other medical and psychological support staff in all hotspots in order to perform efficiently the vulnerability assessments.</p>
<p><b>Speed up the interviews and procedures for the assessment of asylum applications</b></p>	<p>At the end of September, EASO with the cooperation of the Greek Asylum Service established a <b>helpdesk based in Athens</b>, where three senior Member State experts and one expert in Country of Origin are available to respond to inquiries of EASO case workers and vulnerability experts, on matters of procedure, quality review and vulnerability assessment.</p> <p>Asylum tools now on stream include the <b>new Standard Operational Procedures</b> for the Asylum Border Procedure, a <b>template for merged interviews</b> and a <b>list of Country of Origin Information</b> references. Considerable improvements have been registered in the <b>scheduling of asylum interviews</b>, as well as the <b>quality and duration</b> of these interviews.</p> <p>The time lapse between the expression of interest to apply for asylum and the actual lodging of the application does not exceed two weeks, in average. Information for the residents of the Reception and Identification Centres, has also improved with info-booths successfully operating in all islands.</p> <p>Accelerated procedures have not yet impacted on the output of the appeals process. In a recent meeting with Members of the Appeal Committees it was concluded that the following proposals will be further examined to help increase the output: a) improvement of the case allocation system b) hiring of more rapporteurs and amendment of working arrangements c) specialisation of the committees; and d) setting performance targets and monitor productivity.</p>
<p><b>Maintain and further accelerate the eligibility procedure for applicants from countries of origin with low recognition rates</b></p>	<p>The procedure is accelerated in all the islands and the Asylum Service and EASO monitor the situation closely.</p> <p>On 19 October 2017, at a joint operational meeting the Greek Asylum Service and EASO discussed <b>key issues regarding scheduling and planning in advance, management of interpretation and procedural issues</b>, with the view of assessing the needs for the coming months and further strengthening their cooperation at central and local level.</p>

<sup>1</sup> This annex builds on the previous reporting available in the Seventh Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement (COM(2017) 470), notably Annex 1.

Priority actions	State of Play <sup>1</sup>
<b>Improve the security and safety arrangements on the islands</b>	<b>Comprehensive evacuation plans and summaries</b> for all islands are now available for each hotspot. Evacuation drills for the staff working in the hotspots have taken place in all the Reception and Identification Centres. Additional support by Greek Police officers is necessary to ensure a systematic control of the entrances of the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC). Patrols inside the accommodation areas need to be increased together with a strict surveillance of each safe-area for unaccompanied minors which is still lacking in some RICs.
<b>Appoint permanent coordinators for the hotspots</b>	As of 20 February 2017, permanent commanders provide coordination at the hotspots. There is an <b>urgent need for the formal adoption of the Standard Operational Procedures</b> for hotspots by the Greek authorities in order to start their implementation in all the hotspots by the Reception and Identification Centres.
<b>Increase the number of Appeal Committees</b>	<b>13 Appeal Committees</b> are operational, supplemented by an alternate Committee.
<b>Increase the number of decisions per Appeal Committee</b>	Despite the <b>increase of the number of Appeal Committees</b> and the assistance of 11 EASO rapporteurs, the number of second-instance decisions delivered by the Appeal Committees remains low. The number of opinions drafted by the rapporteurs is also an issue. Ways in which the EL authorities could urgently increase the output of the committees include the engagement of the committee members on a full time basis and dedicated to this task alone; finding solutions to ensure close proximity of the Appeal Committees to the locations of concerned asylum seekers (preferably on the islands themselves); and the number of the committees.  The ruling of the Council of State published on 22 September confirmed the inadmissibility of asylum application of two Syrians pronounced previously in first and second instance on the basis that Turkey is a safe third country for them to return, has not yet had the expected effect of increasing the number of Appeal decisions in such as a way as to increase the number of returns. In the week, of 30 October, the Appeal Committees delivered 63 negative second instance decisions related to inadmissibility regarding Syrians.
<b>Maintain European Border and Coast Guard Agency deployments at the necessary levels</b>	The European Border and Coast Guard Agency currently deploys 45 <b>escorts</b> in Lesvos, who cover the transportation needs of the return operations. Continued Member State deployments are required.  The European Border and Coast Guard Agency needs to be ready to swiftly increase its support in view of a possible increase of return operations to Turkey.
<b>Limit the risk of absconding</b>	Greek authorities continue to <b>apply geographical restriction of movement</b> to newly arrived migrants and asylum applicants who, are not allowed to leave the island in which they have arrived.  There is an electronic follow-up through automated daily and weekly lists/reports: <u>daily</u> : list of scheduled interviews, list of appointments for registration, list of decisions with undelivered notifications, list of returnable cases, daily list of discontinued cases, list of archived cases used by the Greek authorities to follow-up the files of Persons of Concern and implement return measures where applicable; <u>Weekly</u> : list of no-shows for interviews, list of no-shows in registration appointments.  Increased patrolling by EL police officers would further limit the risk of absconding.  The urgent application of an entry/exit system in the hotspots would also help to better monitor the migrant population and trace their whereabouts.
<b>Scaling up the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme in the islands</b>	Between January and September 2017, an average of <b>145 persons per month</b> have been transferred <b>via the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme from the Greek islands</b> , while in June-December 2016, <b>70 beneficiaries</b> on average were transferred every month.  AVRR activities from the islands, currently implemented by the International Organisation for Migration, need to be further supported in order to increase the rate of AVRR operations.

Priority actions	State of Play <sup>1</sup>
<b>Issue return decisions at an earlier stage in the return process</b>	Technical and IT adjustments are urgently required order to be able to issue return decisions at the same time as the notification of negative first instance asylum decisions.
<b>Create additional reception capacity on the islands and upgrade the existing facilities</b>	<p>Despite considerable efforts to increase the reception capacity at the islands and improve the conditions, the accommodation for newcomers remains below the accepted levels in a number of cases. These shortcomings have been highlighted in the face of the increased number of arrivals and also require urgent upgrading in terms of winterisation.</p> <p>Adequate reception conditions for unaccompanied minors, including safety features, are still not fully ensured in the islands, namely for the children who still remain in protective custody.</p>
<b>Create sufficient detention capacity on the islands</b>	<p><b>710 places</b> are currently available <b>in pre-removal centres</b> on the islands, 210 in Lesvos and 500 in Kos. There are still <b>no detention facilities in Samos and Chios.</b></p> <p><b>EL authorities need to urgently increase detention capacity so as to be able to increase the pace of returns.</b></p>