



Commission reports on progress made under the European Agenda on Migration

Brussels, 8 December 2016

The Commission is today reporting on progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and on the EU's relocation and resettlement schemes.

The Commission also adopted a fourth Recommendation today that takes stock of the **progress achieved by Greece to put in place a fully functioning asylum system** and sets out a process for the gradual resumption of Dublin transfers to Greece.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"Our comprehensive European approach on migration is showing positive results. We can see this in the continued implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the dramatic decrease in the number of irregular migrants arriving in Greece. We also see it in the progress made by the Greek authorities in rectifying deficiencies in the country's asylum system, which has allowed us to recommend the gradual resumption of Dublin transfers to Greece as of 15 March 2017. This will provide further disincentives against irregular entry and secondary movements, and is an important step for the return to a normally functionally Dublin and Schengen system."*

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Both Italy and Greece have made herculean efforts in recent months in managing the refugee crisis. The fact that today we close the infringement cases on the fingerprinting and registration of migrants is proof of that. This November was a record month for relocation with over 1,400 persons transferred, and Member States must build on this progress by further intensifying and sustaining their efforts. Our aim is to relocate all those in Italy and Greece who are eligible for relocation within the next year. These efforts, together with a lasting reduction in arrivals from Turkey thanks to the EU-Turkey Statement, are necessary building blocks for a gradual return to the Dublin system for Greece."*

Steady progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement

The implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement has confirmed the trend of a steady delivery of results, albeit in the face of many challenges. Numbers of irregular crossings of the Aegean during the reporting period remained dramatically lower than before the EU-Turkey Statement. Since March, arrivals have averaged 90 per day, compared to 10,000 in a single day in October last year. **Return operations** have continued to be carried out with an additional 170 persons returned since the Third Report, bringing the total number of persons returned under the Statement or the Greece-Turkey bilateral readmission protocol to 1,187. However, important shortfalls remain, notably as regards the still too slow pace of returns from Greece to Turkey which has led to additional pressure on the Greek islands. The situation deserves not only careful monitoring but, more importantly, additional efforts to help improve the situation on the Greek islands. It is therefore essential that sufficient resources are provided to ensure the effective processing of asylum applications and that Member States respond in full to calls from the European Asylum Support Office. To ensure full implementation of EU actions under the EU-Turkey Statement and to alleviate the pressure on the islands, the EU Coordinator Maarten Verwey has today published a Joint Action Plan elaborated with the Greek authorities.

As regards the implementation of the **Visa Liberalisation Roadmap**, seven benchmarks remain to be met by Turkey. The Commission encourages Turkey's efforts to complete the delivery of all outstanding benchmarks as soon as possible. The Commission and Turkey have continued their dialogue to find solutions, including on the legislative and procedural changes needed to meet the outstanding benchmarks.

The Commission has continued to accelerate the delivery of funding under the **Facility for Refugees in Turkey**, having already allocated a total of €2.2 billion out of the €3 billion foreseen for 2016-2017 to address the most urgent needs of refugees and host communities in Turkey. The amounts contracted have increased to €1.3 billion. The Commission is making all necessary efforts to ensure an acceleration of disbursements under the Facility, the sum of which has now reached €677 million.

Dublin transfers to Greece to be gradually resumed

Today, the Commission adopted its Fourth Recommendation on the resumption of Dublin transfers to Greece as a step towards a normal functioning of the rules of the Dublin system. The Commission finds that Greece has made significant progress in putting in place the essential institutional and legal structures for a properly functioning asylum system. However, the resumption has to take account of the fact that Greece is still facing high migratory pressure and that deficiencies in the Greek asylum system remain, in particular as regards reception conditions, the treatment of vulnerable applicants and the speed with which asylum applications are registered, lodged and examined.

The Commission therefore recommends that transfers to Greece should be resumed gradually, on the basis of individual assurances from the Greek authorities for each returnee, guaranteeing they will be received in dignity. In order to avoid that an unsustainable burden is placed on Greece, the resumption of transfers will not be applied retroactively and will only concern asylum applicants who have entered Greece irregularly from 15 March 2017 onwards or for whom Greece is responsible from 15 March 2017 under other Dublin criteria. To support the efforts of Greece, the Commission calls on all Member States to fully comply with their relocation obligations and to ensure sufficient deployment of asylum experts to Greece.

Applicants should only be transferred if the Greek authorities give individual assurances in each case that the applicant will be treated in accordance with EU law. Vulnerable asylum applicants, including unaccompanied minors, should not be transferred to Greece for the time being. An EASO team of experts from Member States should be set up to support the cooperation between Member States and to report on whether the persons transferred back to Greece are treated in accordance with the assurances provided by the Greek authorities. The Commission will regularly report on the progress made in the implementation of the Recommendation and update its recommendations if necessary.

Progress on relocation and resettlement

November saw **1,406** relocations, the highest monthly number so far, confirming a continuous positive trend, with relocation from Greece stabilising around 1,000 per month and relocation from Italy having increased significantly. In total, **8,162** persons have been relocated so far, **6,212** from Greece and **1,950** from Italy.

The Commission considers that it should now be feasible to transfer all eligible relocation applicants in Greece and Italy to other Member States by September 2017. To achieve this goal, Member States should from now on carry out **at least 2,000 relocations per month from Greece and 1,000 from Italy**. As of April 2017, the monthly number of relocations from Greece should be at least 3,000 and from Italy 1,500.

The Commission has continued to work closely with the Greek and Italian authorities as well as Member States to remove obstacles to speedier relocation on the ground. Today, the Commission decided to **close infringement procedures** against Italy and Greece for non-implementation of the Eurodac regulation because in both Member States, there is now a fingerprinting rate of close to 100% of third-country nationals liable to be fingerprinted who entered the EU irregularly at their external borders.

Member States have also continued to increase their efforts on resettlement – offering legal and safe pathways to **13,887** people so far out of the 22,504 agreed under the July 2015 scheme. Since the previous report a record monthly number of 2,035 people have been resettled mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. An additional **544** Syrian refugees have been resettled from Turkey, bringing the total number of resettlements from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement to **2,761**.

For more information

- Relocation and resettlement:

[Communication: Eighth Report on Relocation and Resettlement](#)

[Annex 1](#): Relocations from Greece

[Annex 2](#): Relocations from Italy

[Annex 3](#): Resettlement State of Play

[FACTSHEET: Relocation and Resettlement](#)

[FACTSHEET: Managing the refugee crisis: EU financial support to Greece](#)

[Frequently asked questions](#): Establishing an EU Resettlement Framework

[The European Agenda on Migration](#)

- EU-Turkey Report

[Communication: Fourth Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement](#)

[Annex 1](#): Joint Action Plan

[Annex 2](#)

[FACTSHEET: Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#)

[Frequently asked questions](#): Implementing the EU-Turkey Statement

- Dublin recommendation:

[Fourth recommendation on urgent measures to be taken by Greece in view of the resumption of transfers under the Dublin Regulation](#)

[Frequently asked questions](#): Recommendation on the conditions for resuming Dublin transfers of asylum seekers to Greece

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