



Brussels, 12.4.2017
COM(2017) 212 final

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

Eleventh report on relocation and resettlement

1 Introduction

The Eleventh Report on Relocation and Resettlement provides an updated state of play on the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes since the last report of 2 March¹, and outlines the gaps and outstanding actions that still need to be taken to deliver on the commitments under both schemes.

Although arrivals of migrants continue at low levels, Greece remains under pressure with over 62,200 migrants still present in its territory, of which around 14,000 on the islands and around 48,200 persons on mainland Greece. In Italy, 24,672 have arrived since the beginning of the year, a 36% increase compared to the same period in 2016. The number of arrivals of Eritreans, the main nationality eligible for relocation in Italy, has dropped significantly in 2017: from the second country of origin of arrivals in 2016, representing 11.5% of arrivals, to the tenth place in March 2017, representing only 2.4% of arrivals. However, despite this steep decline, there is still a significant number of Eritreans who arrived for the most part in 2016 (11,000) and who should be relocated to other Member States. Relocation therefore remains a key measure to alleviate the pressure on Greece and Italy by sharing the responsibility in dealing with those migrants clearly in need of international protection.

As previously reported, the number of people eligible for relocation present in Italy and Greece is below what is foreseen in the Council Decisions. So far, 26,997 eligible applicants were registered in Greece and 8,000 in Italy. In Greece, where the number of registered applicants for relocation is expected to remain stable, around 14,000 people still need to be relocated. Relocating all those eligible within the remaining months is therefore feasible and should be a priority. The set² monthly targets of at least 1,500 people relocated from Italy and at least 3,000 from Greece intend to facilitate and accelerate the relocation of all those eligible in an effective and smooth manner within the timeframe of the Council Decisions, thus reaching the goal of this emergency measure.

The Commission has consistently called upon Member States to increase their efforts to meet the set relocation targets and stands ready to assist Member States in making progress towards meeting their legal obligations. The Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU organised a specific session during the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 27 March 2017 to discuss how to intensify relocation. Some results are emerging. Some Member States that had slowed down their participation are now relocating again. Thanks to all relevant stakeholders, progress has been made, which has resulted in a new record of monthly relocations (more than 1,600 for Greece and more than 800 for Italy) bringing the total number of people relocated to 16,340 (5,001 from Italy and 11,339 from Greece) as of 10 April 2017. This is a 27% improvement on the best previous month.

However, further intensified and coordinated efforts from all Member States, in particular those who have not relocated at all, as well as solid cooperation between all actors involved is still required to relocate all those eligible from Italy and Greece by September 2017. As already indicated in previous reports, the preconditions and operational infrastructure to make relocations happen are now fully in place. While Italy, Greece, the EU agencies and international organisations have all increased their capacities to meet the set targets, some

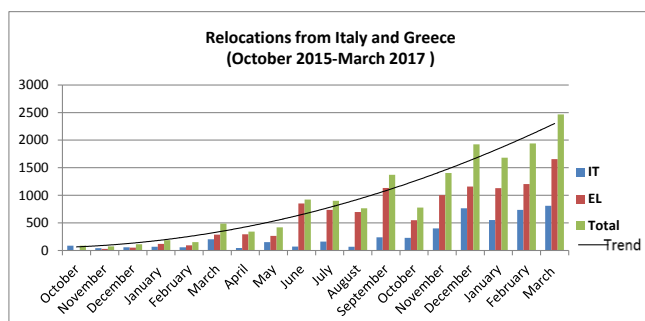
¹ COM(2017) 202 final.

² COM(2017) 791 final.

Member States still face difficulties to respect the timeframes agreed in the Relocation Protocols for certain steps and therefore are creating bottlenecks that prevent intensified relocations. This 11th report includes targeted recommendations for specific Member States aimed at removing those bottlenecks that affect the common efforts to facilitate and accelerate relocations.

As regards resettlement, the implementation of the July 2015 Conclusions to resettle 22,504 people is well on track with 15,492 people in need of international protection resettled so far, which is over two thirds of the agreed number. Since 28 February 2017, 1,070 people have been resettled mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Part of the resettlement under this European scheme serves also to implement the resettlement under the EU-Turkey Statement. Since the starting date of 4 April 2016, 4,618 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey to the EU within that mechanism, including 1,053 since the previous report.

2 Relocation



The pace of relocation has further increased this month and additional efforts would allow to reach the set targets.

In absolute terms, **Germany** is now the country that has relocated the largest number of applicants (3,511) so far, followed by **France** (3,157) and the

Netherlands (1,636). Right now, **Malta** and **Finland** are the only two Member States so far on track to meet their obligations in time for both Italy and Greece (see Annex 3). **Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal** are also steadily progressing on their obligations for Greece and Italy. **Norway** is about to relocate its commitments.

However, the outlook continues to be disappointing for some other Member States. **Hungary** and **Poland** are still not participating in the relocation scheme therefore not fulfilling their legal obligations.³ The **Czech Republic** has not pledged since May 2016 and has not relocated anyone since August 2016, having relocated less than 1% of its allocation. **Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia** are relocating on a very limited basis (2% of their allocation relocated).

In addition, despite their recent efforts to accelerate relocation, **Belgium, Germany** and **Spain**, have relocated a little more than 10% of their allocation so far.

The targets set by the Commission aim at ensuring the relocation of all those eligible currently present in Italy and Greece in an effective and timely manner, avoiding any operational and logistical bottlenecks that would result if the majority of remaining transfers were to be implemented in the last weeks of September. Meeting those targets requires additional efforts and flexibility at each step of the relocation procedure, from the pledges until the transfer,

³ Hungary and Slovakia, supported by Poland, have challenged the legality of the second Council Decision on relocation. However, an annulment action does not have suspensive effect. The hearing of the cases before the Court of Justice of the European Union will take place on 10 May.

including sufficient reception capacities in the Member States of relocation after the relocation takes place. The assessment of the state of play and recommendations therefore follow these steps. Small efforts by all stakeholders at each step can make a significant difference in the total numbers relocated per month. It should be noted that the two first steps (pledges and identification) have to take place in parallel.

Pledging: higher and more monthly pledges needed

Since the last report, **Romania and Spain have started pledging again**. In addition, **Sweden**, whose one-year suspension from relocation expires in June 2017, has begun pledging with the aim to meet its entire legal commitment within the timeframe of the Council Decisions. In addition, **Lithuania** has resumed its pledging for Italy and **Bulgaria, Cyprus and Croatia** have become more active in Greece. **Austria** has recently announced its intention to start relocating soon, in particular vulnerable applicants from Italy.

However, more monthly pledges are still required to reach the targets to relocate all those eligible in Italy and Greece. Having a sufficient number of pledges is also crucial to ensure the quality of the matching procedure (whereby Italy and Greece match an individual applicant with a specific Member State). In this sense:

- **Hungary and Poland** should start pledging and relocating immediately; the Commission stands ready to discuss with these Member States on how to assist them in making progress towards meeting their legal obligations, taking into account the importance for all Member States to show solidarity towards Greece and Italy;
- **Austria** should start pledging for Italy and Greece as soon as possible and **the Czech Republic and Portugal** should now start pledging again for both Italy and Greece;
- **Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland and Slovakia** should start pledging for Italy as soon as possible;
- **Croatia and Slovenia** should increase the regularity of their pledges and pledge on a monthly basis for both Italy and Greece while **Luxembourg** should pledge on a monthly basis for Greece and **Latvia** for Italy;
- **Belgium and Spain** should increase their monthly pledges for Italy and Greece, while **Germany and Slovakia** should increase their monthly pledges for Greece; **France** should increase its pledges for Italy and pledge on a monthly basis while continuing its currently monthly efforts for Greece.

Finland, Lithuania, Malta, and the Netherlands should continue, as a minimum, with their current monthly efforts.

Some Member States have not been participating in relocation from Italy i.e. **Estonia and Ireland**, or have been doing so only on a limited basis, i.e., **France**, partly because of Italy's strict policy regarding additional security interviews by Member States of relocation on its territory. As reported last time, arrangements with Europol and the Italian authorities have been made to facilitate additional security checks, including additional security interviews. In addition, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) experts can also carry out more in-depth interviews to detect possible exclusion grounds at the request of the Member State of relocation. **It is essential that Italy should be open to allowing additional security interviews, including, if necessary, through bilateral arrangements with the Member States concerned.** This will contribute in stepping up relocation. **At the same time, more flexibility regarding the need for additional security interviews should be shown also by**

the Member States of relocation who need to start relocating without further delay.

Identification and registration of migrants for relocation: Italy is encouraged to do more

Greece has finalised the registration ("lodging of application for international protection") of all those who were covered by the pre-registration exercise, including those eligible for relocation. In total 26,997 people have lodged their applications under the relocation scheme; 11,339 people have been already relocated while **13,845 still need to be relocated.**⁴ Although more applicants for relocation might still be registered before 26 September 2017 and some might be excluded from the relocation scheme, the total number of persons registered for relocation is overall expected to remain stable.

Italy has so far registered for relocation about 8,000 people. According to the Italian authorities, an additional **1,000** are in the pipeline to be registered. However, around 20,700 Eritreans arrived in Italy in 2016. Italy **should speed up the registration procedure and identify and register for relocation all those eligible as soon as possible and continuously.** To this end, Italy should increase the number of staff processing applications and take charge requests for relocation in the Dublin Unit, if needed with EASO's support. It should also make full use of its territorial administration and the existing EASO mobile teams to reach out, inform and register for relocation the large number of eligible migrants hosted outside the original relocation hubs. To ensure this, efforts should be made to raise awareness about the relocation scheme in the Questure and in the reception centres. It is also crucial that **all those eligible for relocation** arriving in Italy through hotspots or other ports of disembarkation are **orderly channelled to specifically designated relocation hubs** as foreseen in Italy's Roadmap adopted in September 2015 and revised in March 2016. The current practice, whereby migrants eligible for relocation are spread all over the Italian territory, needs to be avoided to the extent possible for new arrivals, since it creates *inter alia* significant logistical obstacles and impedes swift relocation transfers.

The matching procedure: Member States should avoid too restrictive preferences

The Greek Asylum Service and the Italian Dublin Unit have been carrying out the matching of the applicants with the Member States of relocation within the timeframe agreed in the Relocation Protocols, taking into account as far as possible the preferences expressed by the Member States of relocation that aim to facilitate integration of the relocated person in the Member State of relocation. However, with some Member States of relocation the matching has become a burdensome and time consuming procedure due to the very restrictive preferences expressed (e.g., only single mothers with children) sometimes in negative terms (e.g., no single men, no Eritreans), or due to additional requirements, such as specific lists of persons that have been identified by an NGO from the Member State of relocation working in Italy or Greece. Unduly restrictive preferences have become a way to exclude candidates or select only a very narrow group of applicants rather than to allow for a better matching process that facilitates integration.

⁴ 1,873 persons candidates for relocation have been rejected by the Member States of relocation, were channelled to the Dublin procedure or to the national Greek procedure (e.g., because the submission was revoked by Greece for administrative reasons, negative security check by the Greek police before submission, etc.), or, a very limited number, passed away.

This practice, which is not in line with the procedure set in the Council Decisions on relocation and slows down the process, should stop. It is for the Greek and Italian authorities to carry out the matching procedure taking into account any family, linguistic, social, cultural or other links that may exist between the individual applicant and the potential Member State of relocation. Ultimately, the Greek and Italian authorities are solely responsible for the final decision. It is neither up to the applicants nor to the Member State of relocation to choose.

EASO's matching tool will be operational in May and will mitigate to a large extent these problems. To this end, Greece should grant as a matter of urgency the security clearance for the second EASO expert. EASO's tool will process a large number of applicants at the same time enabling an automatic matching between the applicant's registration data (e.g. applicant's profile) and the multiple pledges and preferences of Member States of relocation. However, for the tool to be effective, it requires Member States to communicate flexible enough preferences.⁵

All Member States should follow the example of those (like Croatia, Malta, Slovenia and Romania) that are providing useful preferences (e.g. professions, qualifications that could facilitate integration) while at the same time should be ready to welcome all types of migrants (large families, unaccompanied minors, single male applicants). Member States with very strict/narrow preferences or imposing additional requirements should reconsider such practices as this slows down the progress. In particular:

- **Slovakia** should broaden its preferences and stop rejecting legally eligible relocation requests because the applicant does not meet the preferences expressed; **Lithuania** should also broaden its preference and **France** should do so for Italy;
- **Bulgaria** should stop excluding Eritreans;
- **Spain** should consider refraining from presenting specific names to be relocated as far as possible;
- **Germany** should provide for more flexibility regarding the proof of extended family links. The relocation procedure does not require the same level of certainty as the family reunification under the Dublin procedure. Moreover, family links need to be interpreted in broad terms, taking into account the fact that reunification with nuclear family falls under the Dublin procedure. Relocation applications should not be rejected on the basis of non-demonstrable extended family links or because applicants have family ties in Italy or Greece (particularly when Italy and Greece are also sending relocation requests for those extended family members);
- **All Member States should avoid excluding** from their preferences **vulnerable applicants** since these are to be relocated with priority. Member States are **encouraged to fill in the economic sectors** for which there is a shortage on the labour market in the pledging template which was dedicated for this purpose.

⁵ The tool takes into account the different matching criteria simultaneously (qualifications and characteristics of the applicants, priority to vulnerable applicants, the capacities of Member State to receive vulnerable persons, preferences, deadlines). This will increase the efficiency of the matching process by processing high number of cases and rapidly identifying the applicants that could be relocated to a particular Member State. It will also safeguard the transparency of the process by keeping track of the profiles of the persons relocated, the fair distribution of particularly vulnerable applicants and the degree to which matching criteria (characteristics and qualifications which may facilitate integration) were used. EASO has developed specific guidance and a specific form for "preferences".

Response by the Member State of relocation: good progress but more can be done

Member States have overall reduced their response time to relocation requests. In addition, those with big monthly pledges have generally **followed the Commission's recommendation** to send acceptances in small batches (of 50 or so) to ensure a continued flow of replies and facilitate the logistics of the notification and pre-departure phase. **However**, despite this progress, **only a few Member States** (e.g., **Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, and Slovenia**) **respect the timeframes agreed** in the Relocation Protocols. The average response time is 35 days for Italy and 26 days for Greece instead of the 10-working day period set out in the Relocation Protocols.

Good progress has been achieved regarding **rejections of relocation requests**. Member States are generally rejecting cases only on the grounds established in the Council Decisions and are now making use of the channels put in place by Europol and the Greek authorities to notify in a secured manner the specific reasoning for those rejections. However, some Member States still apply a too broad interpretation of "danger to public order" making their rejection rate higher than the average.

Recommendations:

- **Member States** should increase their capacity to be able to process application requests and send replies within the 10-working day timeframe agreed in the Relocation Protocols;
- **France** should explore the possibility to send acceptances in smaller batches;
- **Estonia** should explore the possibility of a narrower interpretation of "danger to public order";
- **All Member States** are encouraged to follow **Finland's example** and apply the public order concerns in a less narrow manner, particularly with regard to married minors (see specific section on unaccompanied minors).

Notification, Pre-departure phase & Transfer: additional security interviews and lack of reception in the Member State of relocation are one of the main remaining reasons for delays

With 4,347 people awaiting transfer in Greece and 588 in Italy, currently this is the phase presenting the **biggest bottleneck** in the relocation procedure. While the Relocation Protocols established that the transfer should take place within two weeks from the notification by the Greek or Italian authorities (or approximately three weeks from acceptance by the Member State of relocation), the average time between acceptance and transfer is currently 37 days in Italy and 52 days in Greece. Delays in transfers have a very negative impact on the scheme, seriously undermining its credibility and efficiency as well as increasing the risks of absconding and tensions among applicants.

The reasons for these delays are varied. In Greece **additional security checks, including interviews, by some Member States of relocation** is one of the main causes for delays. These additional checks also lead to the rejection of applicants that have already been notified of the relocation decision. Some of these rejections happen very close to the actual transfer with very negative impacts on the scheme. In such cases, it is even more crucial that the Member State of relocation provides Greece and Italy with well substantiated reasons for the rejection.

The second most important reason for delays, both in Italy and Greece, are the operational hiccups created by the **specific transfer preferences by Member States of relocation**. Member States tend to prefer flights at the end of the month. While Member States with larger monthly transfers, such as Germany or France, prefer single transfers in charter flights, Member States with small or medium-size allocations prefer smaller transfers scattered throughout the month in commercial flights (which complicate transfers in holiday peak seasons). In addition, some Member States request flights on very specific week days and at specific hours. These differences and requirements have a negative impact in the last phases of the relocation procedure, from notification by the Greek or Italian authorities to organising health checks and cultural and pre-departure orientation by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). **More flexibility from the Member States of relocation and more coordination among them are therefore desirable from sending acceptances to the organisation of flights. The Commission stands ready to assist to overcome these logistical coordination challenges.**

The third reason is the **lack of reception capacity in the Member State of relocation**. IOM has had to postpone some transfers as some Member States (Portugal) did not have the capacity to swiftly accommodate accepted relocation applicants. Member States will need to ensure their reception capacity is capable of accommodating relocated applicants.

In Italy, an additional major obstacle is the fact that the applicants eligible for relocation are scattered all over the Italian territory, as described earlier. Such a system creates many challenges for notifying the applicants, carrying out the administrative formalities and additional health checks, and organising cultural orientation sessions.

Finally, the **quality, quantity and relevance of the information provided by the Member States of relocation for the cultural orientation sessions and the active participation of their Liaison Officers** at different stages **remain crucial** to increase the applicants' acceptability of the decision to be relocated to a specific Member State. Not all Member States might have the resources to provide individualised cultural orientation sessions or bring their own staff to carry out these activities (as for example **Estonia, France, Ireland or the Netherlands**). However, the Liaison Officers can and do play a very important role in creating a personal link between applicants and the Member States of relocation through their participation in cultural orientation sessions delivered by IOM or at the notification stage (good practices by **Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal or Romania**). Accompanying applicants to the airport is also important for the applicants to keep contact with the Member State of relocation. Good information materials, such as videos, also increase acceptability (e.g., the good results of **Romanian videos** targeting Syrians relocated from Greece). Moreover, the information provided to the applicants after arrival should be consistent with the pre-departure information.

EASO is now working with specific Member States of relocation (**Portugal and Lithuania**) to develop new information materials, including videos with information about reception conditions and testimonies of successfully relocated applicants. Moreover, EASO is also reviewing the brochures of Member States of relocation and leaflets on relocation for the applicants. **IOM** has organised a specific training for Liaison Officers in Greece to improve the delivery of cultural orientation. In Greece, EASO is also playing an essential role through its hotline and mobile teams to provide accurate and reliable information on the relocation procedure, in the Athens region and the North of Greece, to the around 14,000 applicants awaiting relocation. The EASO hotlines remain operational and receive over 100 calls a week.

Communication with EASO experts and interpreters counteracts the multiple rumours and misinformation that widely circulate among applicants. The continued presence of EASO Asylum Support Teams contributes to enhancing trust in the relocation scheme by keeping applicants updated. This in turn contributes to preventing applicants from following smugglers' misleading proposals and absconding from the process.

Recommendations:

- **Countries carrying out additional security checks are encouraged to increase their processing capacity** (particularly Estonia, France, Ireland and Switzerland) to ensure adherence to the timeframe foreseen in the Relocation Protocols and avoid unnecessary delays. **Last minute rejections should be avoided as much as possible;**
- **All Member States should show necessary flexibility** regarding dates and organisation of flights in coming months. **Member States with large monthly transfers** (Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden) **should coordinate** among themselves (e.g., setting different slots) to avoid logistical bottlenecks and, whenever possible, **consider charter flights;**
- **Portugal** should increase its reception capacity to relocate all applicants already accepted. Some of them have been waiting to be transferred since November 2016. Portugal should finalise together with EASO the new video on relocation;
- **Italy should centralise applicants in a few dedicated relocation centres.** This would allow for a more efficient pre-departure phase, including the necessary health checks and cultural orientation sessions, and contribute to reducing risks of absconding, as applications will be processed more speedily;
- **EASO** should finalise as soon as possible the new leaflet for relocation as well as the videos and other information material in cooperation with the relevant Member States.
- Member States that cannot organise their own cultural orientation sessions should **follow the example of Romania, Latvia and Portugal and ensure the Liaison Officers participate in the notification** of the decision and in **the cultural orientation sessions** organised by IOM. **Member States should also organise cultural orientation sessions upon arrival.**

The specific challenges related to the relocation of unaccompanied minors

According to the Council Decisions on relocation, unaccompanied minors, as well as other categories of vulnerable applicants should be treated as a priority. In practice, the relocation of unaccompanied minors remains challenging for several reasons.

In **Greece**, the pre-registration exercise identified 1,225 unaccompanied minors, of which 568 belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation (36% Syrians and 12% Iraqis). As of 2 April 2017, all 568 unaccompanied minors (under the Greek law) have been registered for relocation and 341 have been relocated. So far, the relocation of unaccompanied minors has been taken up mainly by **Finland** (130 relocated). Member States with large allocations do not accept unaccompanied minors (e.g. France), or only a few (e.g., Belgium or Spain) or impose requirements regarding family links in the Member State of relocation that leave some separated minors and their relatives in a legal limbo, being rejected both under the Dublin Regulation and under the relocation procedure (e.g., Germany). Finally, the majority of Member States that accept unaccompanied minors do not accept married minors (particularly when under the age of 17) since many Member States have legal obstacles to allow the

relocation of this category of separated children (e.g. the adult marrying a minor may be sentenced). Only Finland has been showing flexibility to accept all cases submitted.

It is therefore urgent that Member States provide 163 places⁶ to relocate the registered unaccompanied minors and follow Finland's example showing as much flexibility as possible. In this context, Member States should explore ways of facilitating the relocation of married minors always in line with the best interests of the child. In this regard it should be stressed that the United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees (UNHCR), the Greek Asylum Service and IOM have all carried out best interests of the child assessments at different stages before sending the relocation requests. Therefore the convenience of separating the minor from the adult to whom the minor is married has already been assessed.

In 2016, a record number of 25,772 unaccompanied minors (91.6% of the 28,129 minors) arrived in **Italy**, including 3,806 Eritreans, 218 Syrians, 394 Iraqis and 13 Yemenis (nationalities eligible for relocation). In 2017, by 7 April, a further 3,557 unaccompanied minors have arrived in Italy, of whom around 250 belong to a nationality eligible for relocation.

Only one separated child has been so far relocated from Italy (to the Netherlands in November 2016). In recent months, Italy has been making efforts to facilitate the relocation of unaccompanied minors and the Italian Dublin Unit announced at the Liaison Officers meeting in Rome on 28 March that, following the conclusion of the best interests of the child assessment by the appointed guardians, several relocation requests for unaccompanied minors are under preparation and a first request has already been submitted to a Member State of relocation. **Italy should urgently clarify the procedures to enable fully the relocation of unaccompanied minors (including by facilitating the appointment of guardians), make use of EASO and IOM guidance and support, and create one or more dedicated relocation hubs for unaccompanied minors to accelerate the procedures.**

On 12 April 2017 the Commission adopted a Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration,⁷ which sets out a range of actions which need to be taken now to improve the protection of all children in migration. As recalled also in that Communication, all Member States must prioritise the relocation of unaccompanied children, in line with the Council Decisions on relocation.

3 Resettlement

Significant progress continues to be achieved on resettlement, with over two thirds of the 22,504 resettlements agreed under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 already completed. Since 28 February 2016, 1,070 people have been resettled mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

As of 10 April 2017, 15,492 people have been resettled to 21 States (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Estonia, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United

⁶ There are 522 relocation requests sent out of which 405 have been accepted (and 341 already transferred)

⁷ COM(2017) 211 final.

Kingdom as well as Associated Countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) have already fulfilled their pledges.

A majority of States participating in the scheme indicated that their resettlement efforts were primarily, but not exclusively, directed at Syrians staying in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. This includes efforts from Member States to resettle Syrians from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. Since 4 April 2016, 4,618 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under the resettlement part of the EU-Turkey Statement. In recent weeks, the pace of resettlement has accelerated with 1,053 people resettled under this mechanism since the last reporting period. The remaining number of all pledges has also increased significantly and now stands at 26,112, reflecting in particular Germany's decision to significantly increase its pledge. Resettlements under the EU-Turkey Statement have so far taken place to Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Finland and Sweden. Additionally, Norway has so far resettled 203 Syrians from Turkey since 4 April.

The Member States resettling under the EU-Turkey Statement are advancing well with preparing further resettlement operations, including missions to Turkey to interview resettlement candidates. Austria and Romania are currently preparing their first resettlements under the scheme. There are however also Member States that have received files from UNHCR already in the summer of 2016 but have thereafter taken no action (Bulgaria, Croatia, and the Czech Republic). In addition, there are Member States that have neither resettled nor undertaken any actions to resettle from Turkey (Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom). These Member States should step up their efforts to complete the resettlement process as soon as possible and thus contribute to the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement.

At the same time, as of 10 April 2017, 671 Syrians who were offered the possibility to resettle have changed their mind and decided to stay in Turkey instead. This represents approximately 11% of persons who have been resettled and preselected for resettlement. The decision to remain in Turkey was communicated after the persons concerned had been informed by UNHCR of the resettlement country, and at various stages of the verification process conducted by a Member State (e.g. verification interview, a cultural orientation, prior to departure). Reasons given include personal, cultural and religious reasons as well as reasons linked to the expectation to return to Syria or to remain in Turkey. In addition, lack of or insufficient information about the resettling Member State seemed to be a factor. To address the identified shortcomings, the EU Coordination Team in Ankara is currently undertaking actions to ensure that the information given to Syrian candidates on reception conditions and cultural, social and legal standards in EU Member States is further elaborated.

Recommendations:

- The Member States which have not yet resettled under the ongoing EU level schemes (**Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia**) and those who have not reported any progress and are still far away from reaching their targets (**the Czech Republic, Denmark, Portugal**) should immediately step up their efforts to reach their commitments under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015;

- **Bulgaria, Croatia, and the Czech Republic**, which have received files from UNHCR under the EU-Turkey Statement already in the summer of 2016, should step up their efforts to complete the resettlement process from Turkey as soon as possible;
- **Providing information** to Syrian candidates under the EU-Turkey Statement about resettling countries should be further enhanced to enable the candidates to make an informed decision in order to decrease drop-outs in later stages of the resettlement procedure.

4 Way forward

The European Heads of State or Government have repeatedly recognised the urgent need to address Europe's migratory situation and have called for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation scheme as an essential expression of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility towards Greece and Italy.

The set monthly targets of at least 3000 relocations from Greece and at least 1500 relocations from Italy are now very much achievable given the progress that is being made. Member States should deploy the additional efforts and flexibility as indicated in this report to meet this objective.

On this basis, **given current numbers in Greece and Italy, relocation of all those anticipated to be eligible is possible and feasible by September 2017. The Commission therefore urges Member States to follow up the recommendations set out in this Communication and meet the set targets, to ensure an increased rate of relocations in a coordinated manner before the next report in May 2017.** The Commission stands ready to assist in coordinating these intensified efforts.

As stressed in the previous report, if Member States do not increase their relocations soon, and if the pressure on Greece and Italy is not alleviated, the Commission will not hesitate to make use of its powers under the Treaties.

In any case, pursuant to the Council Decisions, **Member States' legal obligations do not stop after September 2017.** Therefore, the relocation procedure set out in those Decisions must still be carried out by the Member States for eligible applicants within a reasonable timeframe thereafter.

In parallel, Member States should continue to deliver on their resettlement commitments, in particular, **those who have not yet resettled anyone as well as those who are still below their target under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 should step up their efforts.**