



## European Agenda on Migration: Continuous efforts needed to sustain progress

Brussels, 14 March 2018

**Ahead of the March European Council, the Commission is reporting today on progress made under the European Agenda on Migration and sets out further key actions to be taken, including as set out in the Commission's roadmap from December 2017 towards a comprehensive deal on migration by June 2018.**

The decrease in irregular arrivals has been confirmed throughout 2017 and the first months of 2018, while work is ongoing to save lives, tackle root causes, protect Europe's external borders, and further strengthen cooperation with international partners. However, with the overall situation remaining fragile, additional efforts, notably stepped up financial resources, will be needed jointly from the Member States and the EU to ensure a continued, effective response to the migration challenge.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"Today's report takes stock of the progress made since last November, which is due to our strong joint efforts to manage migration in a comprehensive way. We need to maintain this momentum and work hard to take further steps forward, including finding agreement on the reformed asylum system. Some of these actions are very urgent, such as honouring the financial contributions Member States committed to. Managing migration remains a high priority for our citizens and we will only achieve this through a truly comprehensive and collective engagement."*

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The strategy we have put in place to manage migration in partnership with key countries, UN organisations and the African Union is delivering. With the Joint AU-EU-UN Task Force, we assisted more than 15,000 people to return to their homes and start a new life, and we evacuated over 1.300 refugees from Libya. Cooperation and shared responsibilities are key to effectively address this global challenge."*

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"With arrivals down by almost 30% compared to the pre-crisis year 2014, the time is ripe to speed up and intensify our efforts across the board – not to slow down. We cannot risk becoming complacent now. We need more and quicker actions on return, border management and legal channels, in particular resettlement from Africa but also Turkey."*

With 205 000 irregular border crossings in 2017, arrivals to the EU were 28% lower than in 2014, the year before the crisis. Pressure on national migration systems, while decreasing, remains at a high level with 685,000 asylum applications lodged in 2017.

### Saving lives and addressing root causes

Work along the Central Mediterranean route has been further accelerated with a strong focus on saving lives, protecting migrants along the route and voluntary return and reintegration in countries of origin:

- More than **285,000 migrants have been rescued** by EU operations in the Mediterranean since February 2016 and in 2017 more than **2,000 migrants were saved in the desert** after having been abandoned by smugglers.
- The **joint African Union – European Union – United Nations Taskforce** set up in November 2017 has helped more than 15,000 migrants return from Libya to their home countries in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). In addition, over 1,300 refugees have been evacuated from Libya under the new, EU-funded UNHCR **Emergency Transit Mechanism** and should now be swiftly resettled to Europe. Joint efforts will continue to evacuate migrants in detention and put an end to the dire conditions in which they are held, as well as to **dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks**.
- The **EU Trust Fund for Africa** continues to play a critical role in addressing root causes and providing protection to migrants and refugees along the route and fighting migrants smuggling and trafficking, with now 147 programmes for a total of **€2.5 billion approved** across the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. However, more than €1 billion is currently still lacking for the important work ahead.
- The **External Investment Plan** with its European Fund for Sustainable Development has

attracted a lot of interest from partner financial institutions and the private sector. The response to the first invitation for investment proposals under the Guarantee Fund has been very encouraging. Most likely, additional Member States' contributions will be essential in order to respond to the high demand.

**The EU-Turkey Statement** continues to deliver results with irregular and dangerous arrivals remaining 97% down on the period before the Statement became operational. The Commission is today launching the mobilisation for the **second €3 billion tranche of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey** after the first part of the Facility was fully contracted by the end of 2017 ([see full press release here](#)).

## Reinforcing external border management

The **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** is currently supporting national border guards with 1,350 deployed experts along all migratory routes but more contributions are needed in terms of personnel and equipment to sustain the ongoing operations. In parallel, work is ongoing to develop the **European Integrated Border Management strategy**, reflecting the fact that the EU's external borders are common borders requiring collective and joined-up action by national and EU authorities. Today's report presents the [main elements](#) for developing this strategy which should now be taken up by Member State authorities and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

## Delivering on return and readmission

Significant progress is being made in improving cooperation with countries of origin on return. Since last summer, practical **agreements on return have been reached with three additional countries** of origin while discussions with several further partner countries are underway. The Commission is also proposing today to introduce a **new mechanism to trigger stricter conditions for processing visas** when a partner country does not cooperate sufficiently on readmission ([see full press release here](#)). A growing number of **return operations have been supported by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency** but Member States have to ensure that the return of migrants is effectively carried out in the context of these joint operations. Since mid-October 2017, there have been 135 return operations supported by the Agency, returning around 4,000 people.

## Relocation almost finalised, time for a renewed boost for resettlement

More than two years on, the EU **relocation** scheme is successfully coming to an end. **Almost 34,000 persons – more than 96%** of all eligible applicants registered – have been relocated with almost all Member States contributing. Transfers for the remaining applicants (149 in Greece, 933 in Italy) are being prepared. The EU **resettlement** scheme adopted in July 2015 was also successfully completed in 2017 with a total of 19,432 vulnerable persons brought safely to Europe and resettlements under the EU-Turkey Statement continue. Under the Commission's **new resettlement scheme**, designed for at least 50,000 refugees, 19 Member States have pledged almost 40,000 places so far.

## Next steps

Looking forward, the wide range of actions deployed by the EU across its migration policy will need to continue, requiring adequate funding which should combine both increased contributions from the EU budget and reinforced support from EU Member States.

- **Dublin reform:** Work towards a comprehensive agreement on a sustainable migration policy by June 2018 must be intensified in line with the Commission's political roadmap from December 2017
- **Joint AU – EU – UN Taskforce:** Work will continue to help people to leave Libya and with the Libyan authorities towards eliminating the systematic detention of migrants.
- **EU Trust Fund for Africa:** To continue supporting programmes in all 3 geographical windows, Member States need to secure adequate contributions to fill any emerging funding gaps.
- **External Investment Plan:** Member States should provide additional funding to enhance the effectiveness and reach of the External Investment Plan.
- **External borders:** Preparations of the technical and operational strategy for European Integrated Border Management should be taken forward swiftly. Within the European Border and Coast Guard, pledging gaps for both experts and technical equipment should be filled urgently by Member States.
- **Return:** While work to conclude further readmission arrangements and agreements must be intensified, Member States should now make full use of those agreed by swiftly returning more persons in the context of operations organised by the European Border and Coast Guard.
- **Resettlement:** Member States should swiftly start resettlements under the new scheme for

priority countries. Resettlements of refugees evacuated from Libya under the Emergency Transit Mechanism should be urgently implemented.

- **EU-Turkey Statement:** In addition to the mobilisation of the second tranche of €3 billion of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, for their part, the Greek authorities should accelerate work on improving returns under the Statement, including through the planned changes to its asylum legislation. Work must also be stepped up to provide adequate reception conditions in the hotspots. The Council should activate the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme to ensure the continuation of resettlements from Turkey.

## Background

On 13 May 2015, the European Commission proposed a far-reaching strategy, through the [European Agenda on Migration](#), to tackle the immediate challenges of the ongoing crisis, as well as to equip the EU with the tools to better manage migration in the medium and long term, in the areas of irregular migration, borders, asylum and legal migration.

Today's Communication presents the developments since November 2017 and reports on progress made under the Commission's political roadmap towards a comprehensive migration agreement [presented in December 2017](#).

## For More Information

[Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration](#)

[Annexe 1 – EU Trust Fund for Africa](#)

[Annexe 2 – Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#)

[Annexe 3 – European Border and Coast Guard Agency](#)

[Annexe 4 – Relocation](#)

[Annexe 5 – Resettlement](#)

[Annexe 6 – The main elements for developing the European Integrated Border Management Strategy  
Second Annual Report for the Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#)

[Press release: EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey: the Commission proposes to mobilise additional funds for Syrian refugees](#)

[Press release: EU Visa Policy: Commission puts forward proposals to make it stronger, more efficient and more secure](#)

[FACTSHEET: EU-Turkey Statement two years on](#)

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

[FACTSHEET: Central Mediterranean Route: Protecting migrants and managing irregular flows](#)

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