



Relocation and Resettlement: EU Member States urgently need to deliver

Brussels, 16 March 2016

Relocation and Resettlement: EU Member States urgently need to deliver

In 2015 the Commission took decisive action to help address the refugee crisis that EU Member States and neighbouring countries are facing. For the first time in the history of European migration policy, the Commission proposed to [relocate](#) 160,000 people in clear need of international protection from Member States under extreme pressure to other Member States of the European Union – showing concrete solidarity between EU Member States. At the same time, with a view to addressing the global migratory crisis comprehensively and to show solidarity with third countries equally affected, the Commission recommended an [EU resettlement scheme](#) for 20,000 people in need of international protection.

The Commission is reporting today on the implementation of the temporary emergency relocation schemes and the European resettlement scheme. The report summarises the challenges and proposes recommendations to improve the implementation of these schemes.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"EU Member States have made a legal commitment to relocate 160,000 people in clear need of international protection – a commitment they have reaffirmed on several occasions. With the humanitarian situation in Greece getting more acute every day, Member States urgently need to deliver on their commitments and prevent a further deterioration of the situation for refugees in Greece. We need to see a substantial increase in relocations in the coming days and weeks. Member States also need to provide alternative safe and legal routes to Europe for people in need of international protection and to show solidarity with third countries affected by the refugee crisis through a significant increase in EU resettlement efforts."*

Relocation: time for real commitments and quick implementation

With 937 asylum applicants relocated from Greece and Italy as of 15 March, the pace of transfers is unsatisfactory, even if there are now the first signs of a more positive trend. The experience of the first weeks of March, where 287 people were relocated swiftly (including 241 from Greece) shows that relocation can work faster if Member States are truly committed. The lack of political will among Member States has been the most important factor in slowing down the process. This has translated into a limited number of relocation pledges or lengthy response time – jeopardising the ability of the programme to become an alternative to dangerous and irregular routes.

Determined action by Member States for relocation is urgently needed to step up the pace. Currently, the total number of persons ready to be relocated exceeds the pledges made by Member States. In order to meet the commitments allocated so far under the relocation scheme, around 5,600 relocations per month should be achieved as a minimum, implying a relocation procedure of a maximum period of two weeks (see Annex). Based on this assessment, the Commission calls for at least 6,000 relocations to be completed by the time of the next monthly report. In view of the emergency situation on the ground, it then calls for a stepping up of the rate so that by the time of the third monthly report in May, at least 20,000 relocations should have been completed.

In today's report, the Commission makes several specific **recommendations to the Member States of relocation**, asking them to increase their pledges and shorten the time needed to process applications. The Commission also calls on Member States to limit additional security checks to justified cases only, to provide pre-departure information packs and to respond as soon as possible to the European Asylum Support Office's calls for experts. Member States should only indicate selection preferences to improve the matching process for better integration, not as grounds for rejecting relocation requests.

Greece and Italy are called upon to step up efforts from their side to ensure a speedy and efficient functioning of the scheme, in particular in relation to systematic security checks and the quality of the information sent to Member States of relocation. The two countries should also improve their coordination capacity, enhance their reception capacity, avoid the risks of candidates absconding and adequately tailor and improve the procedures for relocation of unaccompanied minors.

Resettlement: a coordinated approach at EU level

Member States have to urgently step up the ongoing resettlement efforts to ensure an orderly, well managed and safe arrival and admission of persons in need of international protection to Europe from third countries.

Based on the information received from Member States and Dublin Associated States, **4,555** displaced people in need of protection were resettled as of 15 March to 11 countries. Most of the participating countries have resettled Syrians staying in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In addition to this framework, some countries are also running separate resettlement schemes as a result of previous international commitments.

The main challenges identified by today's report are linked to the differences in selection criteria, length of procedures, integration tools or number of places available between Member States. Problems also arise from the lack of reception capacity, and from the delays caused by exit clearances in third countries.

The Commission is calling for the exchange of best practices and experiences among the resettling countries to be stepped up, in particular for those countries engaging in resettlement for the first time.

In addition, Member States should continue work on the [voluntary humanitarian admission scheme for Syrian Refugees in Turkey](#), proposed by the Commission on 15 December 2015. Concrete political commitments are needed on the start date of the scheme, its scale and the distribution model from the Member States and Dublin Associated States interested in taking part in the scheme. In the meantime, Standard Operating Procedures for the scheme are being finalised to ensure swift implementation following a political agreement.

Background

The temporary emergency relocation scheme was established in two Council Decisions in September 2015 in which Member States committed to relocate 160,000 people from Italy and Greece (and if relevant from other Member States) by September 2017.

On 8 June 2015, the Commission adopted a proposal on a European Resettlement Scheme, which was followed by an agreement among the Member States of 20 July to resettle 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection, in line with the figures put forward by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Following the EU Leaders' Summit with Turkey on 29 November 2015, the [EU-Turkey Action Plan](#) was adopted. The voluntary admission scheme is one of the important tools of the plan, aiming at supporting Turkey in dealing with the increasing amount of refugees, as well as at offering a safe and legal way to come to Europe for the persons in real need of protection.

The [European Council on 7 March](#) called for an acceleration of the implementation of relocation, in order to alleviate the heavy burden on Greece. Today's report responds to the Council's Conclusions, to the obligation under Article 12 of the two Council Decisions on Relocation, and to the Commission's commitment under the [Roadmap "Back to Schengen"](#).

For More Information

[Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: First report on relocation and resettlement](#)

[Annex 1: Relocations from Greece](#)

[Annex 2: Relocations from Italy](#)

[Annex 3: Greece – State of play report](#)

[Annex 4: Italy – State of play report](#)

[Annex 5: Workflow for relocation from Greece](#)

[Annex 6: Resettlement state of play as of 15 March 2016, under 20 July 2015 conclusions](#)

[Annex 7: Plans for resettlement after 15 March 2016](#)

[FACTSHEET – Relocation and resettlement](#)

[Council Decision on the relocation of 40,000 people from Italy and Greece](#)

[Council Decision on the relocation of 120,000 people from Italy and Greece](#)

Press release: [A Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey for refugees from Syria](#)

[Commission Recommendation for a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme for Refugees from Syria staying in Turkey](#)

