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PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL**

Sixth report on relocation and resettlement

1 Introduction

In September 2015, in view of the continued and exceptional flows of migrants in the EU, the Council adopted the two legally binding Decisions establishing a temporary and exceptional relocation mechanism for 106,000 people from Greece and Italy,¹ the Member States under the most extreme pressure. These Decisions were an expression of the principle of solidarity that lies at the heart of the European project.

At the same time, with a view to addressing the global migratory crisis comprehensively and to showing solidarity with third countries equally affected, on 20 July 2015, Member States, together with Dublin Associated States, agreed to resettle 22,504 people in need of international protection from the Middle East, Horn of Africa and Northern Africa.

Due to its novelty and the complex nature of the underlying exercise the relocation mechanism has taken time to reach cruising speed. Italy, Greece and the Member States of relocation had to establish new structures and procedures, build capacity and mutual trust and improve reception conditions to accommodate the significant number of asylum seekers who could benefit from relocation.

Now, one year after the entry into force of the second Council Decision, the groundwork needed for making relocation work has been laid and important progress achieved in a number of areas. Hotspots are in place and the hotspots approach is being implemented also beyond the areas nominally designated as hotspots; Member States, EU agencies and international organisations are working hand in hand with Italy and Greece to manage the EU borders and migration flows; and the procedures required to facilitate relocation are in place in both Greece and Italy. These efforts have resulted in the creation of truly European operational teams, in the achievement of close to 100% fingerprinting, strengthened security, and a significant increase in the number of applicants who can be relocated.

These efforts have also resulted in a significant acceleration of relocation particularly in the latest months in Greece. During the reporting period, an important number of Member States have stepped up their engagement with the relocation scheme, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of people relocated. Since the last reporting period, 2,595 people were relocated (out of which 2,242 from Greece), with 1,202 (of which 1,026 from Greece) since the beginning of September, compared to 776 in the previous reporting period. Additional Member States have indicated their readiness to also engage more. Half-way through the implementation of the Council Decisions 5,651 people have been relocated so far (4,455 from Greece and 1,196 from Italy). With the continuous arrival of migrants in Italy and the still challenging humanitarian situation in Greece, relocation remains crucial to alleviate the pressure in these countries.

¹ Although the overall target of the relocation scheme is 160,000 persons, 54,000 were not allocated to a specific beneficiary Member State under the second Council Decision on Relocation. According to Article 4(2) of the second Council Decision, the allocation of this remaining number was to be decided at a later stage. A Commission proposal allowing use of this quota for the purpose of resettlement should be adopted by the Council shortly (see below section 4).

At its meeting of 28 June 2016, the European Council² reiterated its call for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes. The Bratislava Roadmap of 16 September 2016³ reaffirmed the need to apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity in future migration policy.

In their letter of intent to President Martin Schulz and to Prime Minister Robert Fico, President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans reiterated that stepping up relocation of refugees from Greece and Italy will be a Commission priority for 2016-2017.

Now that the structures and procedures are in place, in this second year of implementation of the Council Decisions, it is the moment for Member States of relocation to build further on what has been achieved so far by responding fully to these calls and intensifying their efforts to support Greece and Italy, thereby delivering on their legal obligations and applying solidarity in practice.

As regards resettlement, implementation is on track. So far, 10,695 people have been resettled of the agreed 22,504 under the July 2015 scheme, including 2,426 since the previous report, mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. With the agreed actions set out in the EU-Turkey Statement only starting to be applied from 4 April,⁴ 1,614 persons have been resettled from Turkey to the EU under the 1:1 mechanism, including 812 since the previous report.

The Sixth Report on Relocation and Resettlement provides an updated state of play since the last report of 13 July⁵ and assesses the actions undertaken by all relevant stakeholders from 12 July 2016 until 27 September (the reporting period) to deliver on the recommendations made to accelerate the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes.

2 Relocation

2.1 Main highlights during the reporting period

Since 12 July 2016, 7,300 people⁶ have arrived in **Greece**. The number of migrants present in Greece increased compared to the previous reporting period and as of 27 September is around 60,500 migrants, around 13,800 on the islands and around 46,700 persons on mainland Greece.⁷

During the reporting period, the overall positive trend in the number of relocations continued and has significantly increased in September (1,134 people relocated of which 577 in one week).⁸ In addition, the Greek Asylum Service, in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) as well as supported financially by the Commission, successfully concluded a mass

² European Council Conclusions of 28 June 2016. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/28-euco-conclusions/>

³ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/09/16-bratislava-declaration-and-roadmap/>

⁴ SN 38/16, 18.03.2016.

⁵ COM(2016) 480 final.

⁶ Irregular border crossings in Greece from 13 July until 25 September - Source Frontex, as reported in JORA (Joint Operations Reporting Applications). Data may be subject to changes after validation.

⁷ Source: Greece authorities and UNHCR.

⁸ Taking into account relocations expected on 28 September.

pre-registration exercise on 30 July. A total of 27,592 people⁹ were pre-registered of which 67% belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation.¹⁰ Appointments for the full lodging of asylum applications started on 1 September and priority is being given to unaccompanied minors, elderly persons and seriously ill persons. The Greek Asylum Service has strengthened its capacity to process relocation requests, being in a position in August to send more requests than pledges available.¹¹ It is essential now that in parallel to the increase in the capacity of the Greek Asylum System to process relocation requests the other Member States also increase their capacity to open and fill relocation places.

In **Italy**, 52,656 people¹² have arrived since 12 July. Arrivals of Eritreans, one of the nationalities eligible for relocation, also remained high (Eritrea is the second highest nationality among arrivals to Italy with more than 2,000 arrivals in the reporting period). Based on information from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 5,000 Eritreans are currently in Italy awaiting relocation. Relocation transfers from Italy have followed a similar trend as in the previous reporting period. However, significant progress has been made with solving the main bottlenecks previously identified linked notably to security issues during the ad-hoc meeting of the National Contact Points on relocation that took place in Rome on 15 September and was co-chaired by the Commission and the Italian authorities. Apart from Member States, UNHCR, EASO, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Europol and Frontex attended the meeting. This should lead to a significant acceleration of the relocation scheme from Italy too.

The number of **unaccompanied minors** arriving in Italy continued to increase (more than 20,500 arrivals since the beginning of January of which more than 2,800 Eritreans and more than 115 Iraqis). The mass pre-registration exercise in Greece identified 1,225 unaccompanied minors,¹³ of which 48% belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation (36% Syrians and 12% Iraqis).

The pace of relocation of unaccompanied minors continues to be low, with 46 relocated during the reporting period and only from Greece. However, it is expected that the relocation of unaccompanied minors will increase in the near future. Progress has been achieved in that respect. Greece has notably announced that unaccompanied minors will be treated as a priority after the conclusion of the pre-registration exercise and Italy intends to carry out a

⁹ http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Preregistration-data_template_5_EN_EXTERNAL.pdf.

¹⁰ According to the latest quarterly report (Quarter 2 2016) published by Eurostat on 22 September, the nationalities eligible for relocation are Syria, Eritrea, Burundi, Mozambique, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar and Yemen. The nationalities, which met the 75% eligibility threshold according to the Eurostat data from quarter 1 of 2016, that do not meet this threshold anymore, are Central African Republic, Seychelles, Dominica, Laos and Saudi Arabia. As mentioned in the previous report, although Iraqis are no longer eligible for relocation, this does not affect those Iraqis already identified as persons in possible need for international protection (thus, those pre-registered can still be relocated). This would also apply to applicants belonging to the other nationalities that are no longer eligible for relocation.

¹¹ At the end of August, no open pledges were available for the Greek Asylum Service to send new relocation requests to Member States. By 29 August, the Greek Asylum Service had registered around 11,130 relocation requests while total number of pledges were around 8,000 all of which were being processed by the Member States of relocation (awaiting a reply by the Member State of relocation) or already implemented (the transfer has been executed or the applicant had been rejected).

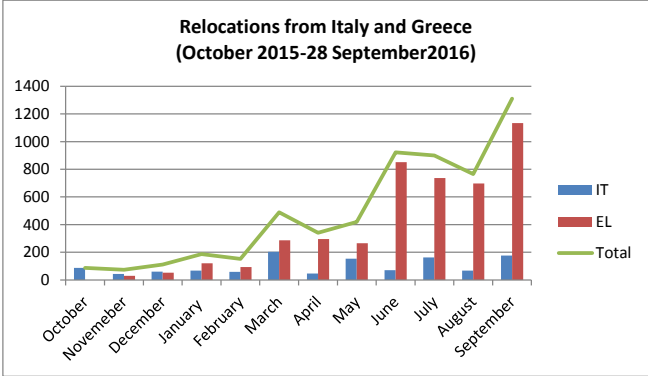
¹² The number of irregular border crossings in Italy from 13 July until 25 September as reported in JORA (Joint Operations Reporting Applications) and collected in the frame of the Joint Operation Triton 2016. Data may be subject to changes after validation.

¹³ http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Preregistration-data_template_5_EN_EXTERNAL.pdf.

first pilot relocation transfer. In addition, more Member States (Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain, in addition to Finland, Luxembourg and Portugal) are now offering places for the relocation of unaccompanied minors and additional Member States are expected to actively engage in the relocation of this category of vulnerable applicants.

2.2 Actions by the Member States of relocation

From 12 July until 27 September, 2,595 additional persons were relocated, 2,242 from Greece¹⁴ and 353 from Italy.¹⁵ France has continued relocating a significant number of people



per flight and Germany and Belgium have indicated their readiness to step up their efforts. Finland, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal continued with regular weekly and monthly transfers and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta have increased the regularity of transfers (monthly or every two months). France is the country that has relocated the largest number of applicants (1,952), followed by Finland (690) and

the Netherlands (726). An additional 81 relocation transfers are planned until the end of September from Greece¹⁶ and at least 67 from Italy¹⁷ and additional transfers for 134 persons are planned for the beginning of October.¹⁸

Actions to address the limited number of pledges: during the reporting period, Germany announced it will submit a monthly indication of readiness to relocate swiftly applicants for international protection (the "formal pledges"). This formal pledge would consist of 500 people for Italy and 500 people for Greece. Belgium also announced a pledge for 100 people for Italy and 200 people for Greece. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Luxembourg have increased the frequency of their pledges and are now formally pledging every month. These are to be added to the monthly formal pledges by Finland, France, the Netherlands and Romania and regular formal pledges by Portugal, Slovenia and Switzerland. In addition, Liechtenstein is now participating in the relocation scheme and formally pledged 10 places from Greece, and Norway submitted its relocation plan from Greece and formally pledged 20 places.

In total 16 Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia)¹⁹ as well as Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland²⁰ have submitted 4,466 formal

¹⁴ 63 to Belgium, 10 to Croatia, 7 to Cyprus, 8 to Czech Republic, 22 to Estonia, 213 to Finland, 911 to France, 158 to Germany, 31 to Ireland, 29 to Latvia, 52 to Lithuania, 33 to Luxembourg, 306 to the Netherlands, 70 to Portugal, 128 to Romania, 3 to Slovakia, 32 to Slovenia and 166 to Spain.

¹⁵ 80 to Finland, 50 to France, 6 to Latvia, 20 to Luxembourg, 9 to Malta, 53 to Portugal, 33 to the Netherlands, 6 to Romania, 8 to Slovenia, 10 to Spain and 78 to Switzerland.

¹⁶ All for 28 September: 15 to Bulgaria, 35 to France, 27 to Portugal and 31 to Spain.

¹⁷ 67 to Finland. Transfers to France, the Netherlands and Switzerland are also planned.

¹⁸ 12 to Latvia and 110 to Romania from Greece and 6 to Malta and 6 to Croatia from Italy.

¹⁹ Belgium 200 for Greece and 100 for Italy, Bulgaria 50 for Greece, Croatia 6 to Italy, Estonia 35 for Greece, Finland 150 for Greece, France 800 for Greece and 50 for Italy, Germany 500 for Greece and 500 for Italy, Ireland 123 for Greece, Latvia 60 for Greece and Latvia 45, Lithuania 80 for Greece and 20 for Italy,

pledges during the reporting period (1,381 formal pledges submitted for Italy and 3,085 for Greece). The total number of formal pledges by Member States of relocation amounts to 13,585 (3,809 to Italy and 9,776 to Greece). However, more progress is needed to ensure that all Member States pledge a sufficient number of places; halfway through the implementing period, the Commission would expect that at least 50% of Member State allocations are pledged.

Austria²¹ and Hungary continue being the only two countries who have not submitted any pledge at all and since April Poland has not taken forward the implementation of its pledges and has not pledged nor relocated any applicant.²²

Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests: Most Member States and Associated States participating in the relocation scheme are increasing their efforts to accelerate the response time to relocation requests and meet the 10 working days target set in the relocation protocols. In general, most States provide positive replies to the relocation requests. However, there are still instances where the acceptance rate could be significantly increased and where the reasoning of rejections should be improved. Good practices in respect of adequately motivating the refusals of the relocation requests, such as those applied by the Netherlands, should be followed by other States.

Slovakia and the Czech Republic continue in particular having a high rejection rate compared to other Member States (more than 50% rejection rate) and the ground for rejection usually used relates to the lack of IDs or travel documents by the applicants, which is perceived as hampering appropriate security checks. While Italy and Greece already carry out thorough secondary security checks before sending relocation requests, Member States could if appropriate make use of additional methods for security verification available for applicants with no travel documents, such as the exchange of fingerprints.

Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants, including unaccompanied minors: 7,036 unaccompanied minors arrived in Italy between 1 July and 31 August of which 1,296 belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation (1,211 Eritreans, 44 Iraqis, 40 Syrians, 1 Central African). In Greece, although it is not possible to know the number of arrivals of unaccompanied minors during the same period, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) reports that 3,779 unaccompanied minors have been referred to EKKA for accommodation since the beginning of 2016. On 19 September 2016 Greece informed the Commission that 860 reception places are available for unaccompanied minors. These facilities are currently full and there is a waiting list for 1,487

Luxembourg 60 for Greece and 40 for Italy, Malta 30 for Italy, the Netherlands 300 for Greece and 100 for Italy, Portugal 400 for Greece, Romania 247 for Greece and 70 for Italy, Slovakia 10 for Greece and Slovenia 40 for Greece and 10 to Italy.

²⁰ Liechtenstein 10 for Greece, Norway 20 for Greece and 80 for Italy, and Switzerland 330 for Italy.

²¹ In accordance with Council Decision 2016/408 of 10 March 2016, Austria benefits from a temporary suspension of the relocation of up to 30% of applicants allocated to Austria under Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601. As a consequence, the relocation to Austria of 1 065 applicants shall be suspended until 11 March 2017. However, the obligations under Decision 2015/1601 continue to apply to Austria in respect of the relocation of the remaining allocation, so pledges and relocations are still required.

²² In early April, Poland suspended the processing of 73 relocation requests that the Greek Asylum Service sent to Poland on the basis of a pledge that Poland submitted on 16 December 2015 thus *de facto* freezing the relocation procedure three and a half months after the submission of the pledge. The same applies to requests from Italy.

unaccompanied minors who need to be placed in appropriate facilities. According to the pre-registration exercise figures, 1,225 unaccompanied minors were recorded as of 19 September.²³ As of 19 September, the estimated number of unaccompanied minors in Greece is 2,477.

The pace of relocation of unaccompanied minors remains slow. Since 12 July, 46 unaccompanied minors have been relocated from Greece (to Finland, Luxembourg, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) bringing the total number of unaccompanied minors relocated to only 75.

Actions to reinforce EASO's capacity to support Italy and Greece: Regarding Greece, EASO sent a reminder to Member States concerning the fifth call for experts²⁴ to support the relocation scheme on 28 July 2016, since there is a continuous need to deploy new experts as their deployments come to an end. The Commission also sent a letter in August to urge Member States to send more senior experts and for longer deployment periods. EASO has received 28 nominations by Member States after this reminder. The total number of experts deployed in Greece as of 27 September is 27 asylum experts and 27 interpreters, which remains insufficient to cope with the increased number of cases now that the mass pre-registration exercise is completed.

Regarding Italy, EASO's most recent call for experts, published on 28 May 2016, requested 35 additional experts to bring the number of experts to a total of 74 as envisaged in the contingency plan agreed with Italian authorities. By 27 September 2016, 76 offers²⁵ have been received. The total number of experts deployed in Italy as of 27 September 2016 is 33 asylum experts and 35 cultural mediators,²⁶ which is still insufficient to cope with the still high number of arrivals of persons eligible for relocation and falls short of the number of experts needed under the contingency planning.

Short deployments are very disruptive for the overall relocation workflow both in Italy and Greece. As deployments come to an end, a drop in the pace of registrations occurs until replacements come. Short deployments also affect the quality of the relocation files as experts need time to become familiar with the procedures in place. More and longer-term nominations are urgently needed to ensure adequate presence of EASO on the ground and the processing capacity of the teams both in Italy and Greece.

2.3 Actions by Greece and Italy, including highlights from the roadmaps

- *Greece*

²³ It is likely that the reduction in numbers is caused by minors who exited Greece through the Western Balkans route earlier in 2016.

²⁴ EASO's fifth call for experts to support relocation in Greece was launched on 21 April and was first reported in the 3rd Report on Relocation and Resettlement. The term of deployment of several experts ended during the reporting period.

²⁵ Austria, Switzerland, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Romania, Germany, Latvia, Spain, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Malta, Belgium, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

²⁶ The roving team performs registration for relocation in various locations where candidates for relocation are accommodated (based on needs indicated by the Italian authorities) and supports the local Questura stakeholders in performing registrations themselves.

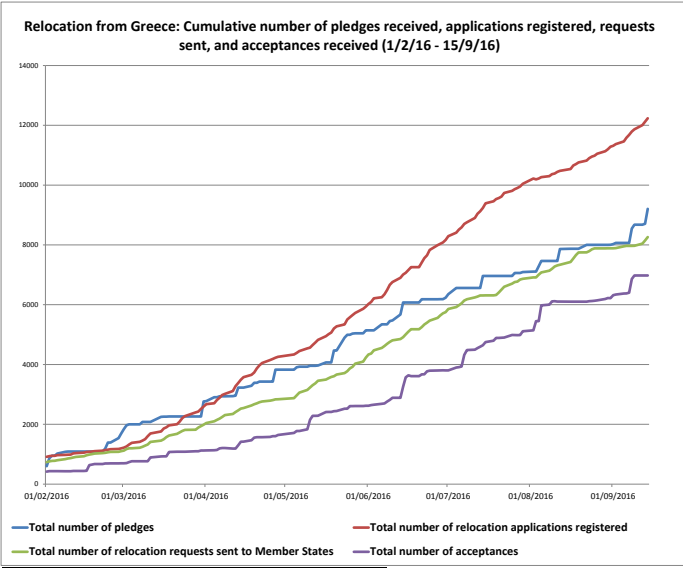
Actions to accelerate the registration and processing of migrants: the Greek Asylum Service concluded the mass pre-registration exercise on 30 July. A total of 27,592 people were pre-registered of which 67% (around 18,000 people) belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation (54% Syrians and 13% Iraqis). Through this large-scale operation, thousands of persons were provided with asylum seeker cards, allowing them to reside legally in Greece and to access health and education services. Appointments for the full lodging of asylum applications started on 1 September and priority is being given to unaccompanied minors, elderly persons and seriously ill persons.²⁷ The people pre-registered are to be added to those that have already been registered and entered the relocation scheme. As a consequence, accelerating relocation becomes a priority to avoid an unsustainable accumulation of cases that could also affect the credibility of the scheme.

Actions to improve the registration capacity of the Greek Asylum Service: The Greek Asylum service has started the recruitment of 177 new staff to be progressively deployed until mid-November 2016 in order to increase its lodging and processing capacity, of which 56 officers will register applicants eligible for relocation. The goal of the Greek Asylum Service is to finalise the full lodging of the applications for those that have been pre-registered within four to five months and at the latest by March 2017. The Greek authorities stated in the letter of 14 July 2016 that more rapid expansion of staffing is not feasible due to the lack of senior staff to train, mentor and supervise newly recruited ones.

From 26 September 2016, the Relocation Unit in Athens will start operating from the new premises within Athens (Alimos), which will provide much needed additional space to increase the processing capacity for relocation (registration and notification).

The mixed Asylum Service/EASO registration teams consist of 7 experts in Athens, 6 experts in Thessaloniki and 4 experts in Alexandroupoli by 27 September. As the Greek Asylum Service requires additional senior staff and specialised profiles (due to the new recruits), EASO will provide more diversified support. On average, the Greek Asylum Service, with the support of EASO, is lodging on a daily basis 113 applicants eligible for relocation. This daily

average is expected to further increase as the new staff become operational and EASO provides its diversified support.



While the gap between the number of relocation requests submitted by Greece and the acceptances by Member States have decreased during the reporting period, the gap between the number of registrations by the Greek Asylum Service and the total number of pledges has significantly increased. This gap became a serious bottleneck during the last week of

²⁷ Those who have not been able to pre-register and wish to apply for international protection would be able to do so by obtaining a registration appointment through Skype. Given than the vast majority of those who wish to apply for international protection have been pre-registered, it is expected that the Skype system would function more efficiently and on a subsidiary basis.

August, when the Greek Asylum Service was unable to send relocation requests due to the lack of open pledges and could become even more serious in the follow-up to the mass pre-registration exercise.

Actions to improve the reception capacity in Greece: As of 14 September, the total reception capacity in Greece stands at over 62 987 places²⁸ in temporary facilities and permanent reception places at the mainland, both for irregular migrants and persons in possible need of international protection who have expressed their will to apply for asylum or have already lodged their asylum applications. According to the information given by the Greek authorities, the total planned capacity of the 39 permanent sites in the mainland is estimated to be around 32,700 places. In the letter of 19 September, Greece affirmed that these new sites that meet dignified living conditions according to the EU standards have been identified and will be fully refurbished. It is imperative to effectively implement these plans as a matter of urgency, and given that some temporary facilities will be transformed into permanent ones, a sufficient capacity in terms of temporary facilities to accommodate any shortfall in capacity resulting from unexpected inflows is also maintained.²⁹

Out of the 20,000 places committed for applicants eligible for relocation under the rental scheme by the UNHCR,³⁰ as of 19 September, 12,045 places were available, including 3,404 places in hotels/entire buildings, 6,559 places in apartments, 385 places in host families, and 507 places in dedicated facilities for unaccompanied minors. In addition, as regard the relocation centres, as of 20 September, only one of the three relocation centres committed by the Greek authorities (Lagadikia) has been established. As of 19 September, 1,190 places were available in the centre. For the remaining two, the Greek authorities have not yet designated suitable sites. Discussions are still ongoing between the UNHCR and the Greek authorities regarding the provision of more sites for the construction of dedicated relocation centres, notably in the Attica region. The three relocation centres should reach a capacity for 6,000 people. As mentioned in the 5th Report, these sites should be designated urgently to avoid bottlenecks in the implementation of the last stages of the relocation workflow following the mass pre-registration exercise.

- *Italy*

Actions to increase the number of and make the hotspots fully operational: In the last months, peaks in the number of arrivals have demonstrated that the current capacity of 1,600 places in the four operational hotspots (Pozzallo, Lampedusa, Trapani and Taranto) is not sufficient. In addition, the majority of disembarkations (around 70%) continue to take place

²⁸ This figure does not include the places provided under the UNHCR rental scheme capacity and the reception places at the hotspots.

[http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country\[\]=83](http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country[]=83)

These temporary emergency and permanent facilities are established on the Aegean islands in the hotspots as well as on the mainland. As of 11 July 2016, there are currently only 1,138 permanent accommodation places that exclusively host applicants for international protection and unaccompanied minors.

²⁹ Commission Recommendation addressed to the Hellenic Republic on the specific urgent measures to be taken by Greece in view of the resumption of transfers under Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013, C(2016) 3805.

³⁰ The Delegation Agreement reached with UNHCR for the 20,000 places rental scheme in January 2016 primarily benefits asylum seekers eligible for relocation. The Delegation Agreement was revised in July 2016 in order to make it clearer in the text that the accommodation scheme includes also the possibility to establish places in relocation sites managed by UNHCR, and that the target group of the accommodation scheme includes not only relocation candidates but also other asylum seekers. UNHCR agreed to make 6,000 places from the rental scheme available to relocation centres to accommodate all fully registered relocation applicants.

outside the hotspots. While first preparatory steps have already been undertaken, Italy should accelerate the opening of already announced additional hotspots. Furthermore, the hotspot approach³¹ as well as hotspot Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)³² should be systematically implemented in other disembarkation ports to the widest extent possible. This entails the provision of sufficient personnel of the EU agencies (Frontex, Europol, EASO). Additionally, wherever possible, adequate reception structures should be foreseen, even in those ports that will not become fully-fledged hotspots as a matter of urgency. Given the increasing rate of unaccompanied minors disembarking in Italy, dedicated areas as well as particular assistance should be provided in all hotspots and transfer to first or second line reception facilities completed in the shortest possible timeframe. While there is no legal time limit for this, the rule should be that migrants are processed as quickly as possible and within a maximum 72 hour.

Actions to improve coordination: Following the adoption and publication of the hotspot SOPs³³ in June and a first set of training sessions, the group that drafted the SOPs will now monitor their implementation, i.e. to draw up suitable indicators. The first meeting of this group will be held on 26 September. New and renewed contracts between Prefectures and hotspot managing entities will need to be in line with hotspot SOPs. The continued lack of an Italian coordinator for each hotspot remains a constraint on the operation of the hotspots.

On relocation, the draft relocation protocol is being adapted on the basis of the conclusions of the ad-hoc meeting of the National Contact Points for relocation on 15 September and will be discussed during the next Liaison Officers meeting foreseen in the autumn.

Actions to improve processing capacities in Italy: As reported in the 5th Report, and in line with the recent increase of pledges made available by Member States, the capacity of the Italian authorities to register and process applications will need to adapt. This should also contribute to reducing the risks of absconding, as applicants' requests will be processed more speedily. In this framework, the teams registering applications need to be strengthened and EASO presence in the new registration Hubs needs to be ensured.

Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests: At the ad-hoc meeting of the National Contact Points for relocation, an agreement was reached regarding the approach to be followed on security-related issues. In particular, participants agreed to increase the involvement of Europol to facilitate the exchange of fingerprints and additional security interviews and of EASO to carry out additional exclusion interviews, following many of the recommendations outlined by the Commission in its 4th Report on Relocation and Resettlement.³⁴ This means that relocation from Italy should now be able to accelerate quickly.

Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants and unaccompanied minors: No unaccompanied minor has been relocated yet from Italy.

³¹ That is namely the involvement of EU agencies (EASO, Frontex, Europol)

³² http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/hotspots_sops_-_english_version.pdf

³³ Available here:

http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/hotspots_sops_-_english_version.pdf

³⁴ COM(2016) 416 final.

Implementing the procedure is a key priority as almost 3,000 unaccompanied minors potentially eligible for relocation (most from Eritrea) have disembarked in Italy this year. After Italy's announcement to start a pilot relocation exercise for unaccompanied minors, a number of Member States showed interest. To swiftly implement this pilot and more largely the relocation of unaccompanied minors, Italy should designate one or more dedicated Hubs for potentially eligible candidates, where EASO could be deployed and assist.

Actions to limit secondary movements: As part of actions taken by the Italian authorities to limit secondary movements, the Italian police is regularly transferring migrants who moved irregularly from the South to the North of the country, back to the reception facilities in the South of the country. To better inform potential applicants about the relocation scheme, discussions are currently taking place on possible deployment of additional EASO teams in areas where an important number of applicants who could be eligible for relocation, in particular Eritreans, are present. The presence and movements of irregular migrants on Italian territory should be closely monitored, and irregular secondary movements prevented.

2.4 Actions by the Commission and EU agencies

- *European Commission*

The Commission has continued supporting Italy and Greece on the ground on a day to day basis, helping with the coordination among various stakeholders and assisting the Greek and Italian authorities in trouble shooting, quick problem solving and in procedure development. As part of this support, the Liaison Officers meeting in Athens on 13 September served to discuss the results of the pre-registration exercise and planned with the Greek authorities and the Member States of relocation the way forward, including identifying those Member States that would be ready to accept unaccompanied minors. The ad-hoc meeting of National Contact Points for relocation held in Italy on 15 September, and co-chaired with the Italian authorities, served to find solutions to the main bottlenecks slowing down relocation in Italy, particularly security-related issues. The Commission is also in constant contact with the Member States of relocation to identify on a bilateral basis possible obstacles in the relocation procedure and propose solutions.

The Commission has continued providing substantial funding to Greece to support the country in its efforts to bring its migration and asylum management system up to EU standards. During the reporting period, approximately EUR 90 million were directly awarded to the Greek authorities to strengthen the country's capacities to improve living conditions and provide primary healthcare services at refugee accommodation centres, as well as to provide reception and healthcare services to the migrants. With this latest funding, the Commission has awarded to Greece, since the beginning of 2015, a total of EUR 352 million in emergency assistance³⁵ from Home Affairs Funds (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, AMIF, and Internal Security Fund, ISF), either directly to the Greek authorities or through EU agencies and international organisations operating in the country. This emergency funding comes on top of the EUR 509 million already allocated to Greece under the national programmes for 2014-2020 (EUR 294.5 million from AMIF and EUR 214.7 million from ISF). Substantial funding (approximately EUR 198 million), aiming at covering the migrants' and refugees'

³⁵ This emergency assistance comes on top of the EUR 509 million allocated to Greece for the period 2014-2020 through its national programmes under the Home Affairs Funds (AMIF and ISF), where substantial funding is also available to support the implementation of asylum policies.

basic humanitarian needs, is also being provided to humanitarian partner organisations, through the recently created Emergency Support Instrument.

Funding has also been provided to the Italian authorities to support their efforts to manage the increased number of migrants/asylum seekers reaching the country. During the reporting period, the Commission awarded the Italian Coast Guard and the Italian Navy a total of EUR 3.2 million under the emergency assistance strand of the ISF. To date, Italy has been granted EUR 23.5 million emergency assistance by the Commission under AMIF and ISF combined. This amount adds up to EUR 592.6 million allocated to Italy under the AMIF (EUR 347.7 million) and ISF (EUR 244.9 million) national programmes.

As part of its monitoring of the implementation of the Council Decisions on relocation, the Commission raised and will continue to raise concerns with those Member States that are falling behind in implementing the Council Decisions.

- *European Asylum Support Office*

Actions to speed up the relocation process and increase the registration capacity in Greece and Italy: Experts are deployed in a number of functions. In Greece, 20 experts currently support the registration process directly through joint processing. 7 other experts are involved in information provision, managing two hotlines and providing information regarding registration, relocation and Dublin procedures. Based on the recommendations on how to enhance the matching process, aimed at matching applicants to specific Member States, EASO has prepared an action plan to start implementation in October.

Following the pre-registration exercise the Greek Asylum Service is working towards reinforcing its registration capacity. EASO will diversify its support to the relocation procedure and include more experts on vulnerability assessment, best interest of the child assessment, exclusion indicators, Dublin Regulation, family unit and document fraud. These experts will function as an escalation desk for difficult cases which will help decongest the regular registration process and safeguard the quality of the relocation files. Reinforced support throughout the various steps of the relocation procedure, from information provision, to registration and the matching process remains needed. EASO is procuring mobile offices for Thessaloniki in order to further increase the registration capacity.

From 11 to 15 July, a delegation representing the Management Board of EASO conducted a gap analysis mission on relocation from Greece. The delegation concluded that relocation functions well and made a number of recommendations which are in line with those included in this and previous reports. EASO will monitor the follow-up to other recommendations of a more short-term, detailed and practical nature.

In Italy, EASO is currently deploying 33 out of the 74 requested experts from Member States and associated countries: 10 experts in the hotspots, 8 experts in two mobile teams (based in Rome and Catania), 11 experts in registration Hubs, and 4 experts in the Dublin Unit in Rome. EASO is also deploying up to 48 cultural mediators (for Arabic, Tigrinya and Kurdish) to support the relocation process (as of 27 September, 35 cultural mediators are deployed on the ground).

3 Resettlement

Based on the information received from the participating States, 10,695 people have been resettled in the period until 26 September 2016 in the framework of the resettlement scheme of 20 July 2015 to 21 resettling States (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). A little over a year since the scheme has been launched, **Sweden** and the **United Kingdom** are the first Member States to have fulfilled their pledges of 491 and 2,200 resettled persons in need of international protection, respectively. Associated states **Switzerland and Liechtenstein** had already fulfilled their respective pledges earlier.

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.

The number of resettlements from Turkey continues to increase as Member States finalise their assessments of files referred to them by Turkey via UNHCR. Since 4 April 2016, 1,614 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under the resettlement part of the 1:1 scheme. An increased number of Member States are also actively participating in the scheme. Since the last progress report, in addition to Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, resettlement has also taken place to Belgium, Estonia and France.

The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March foresees the activation of the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey, once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU were ending or at least had substantially and sustainably reduced. Standard Operating Procedures for the scheme are currently being developed in the Council in close cooperation between the Commission, EASO, UNHCR and IOM. Negotiations on the text that was shared with Turkey on 28 June are ongoing and further exchanges with Member States and Turkey will take place in order to finalise it.

Discussions have continued on the Commission's proposal amending Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 to allow Member States to meet their relocation obligations for the unallocated 54,000 places by admitting to their territory Syrian nationals in clear need of international protection present in Turkey through resettlement or other forms of legal admission. The Council has reached a general approach with minimal changes on 21 September, while the European Parliament voted on its opinion on 15 September 2016. It is now expected that the Council will adopt the proposal in the coming days.

The Commission on 13 July adopted a proposal for a regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework³⁶ to establish a common European policy on resettlement and ensure orderly and safe arrival to Europe for people in need of international protection. The text is currently being examined by the co-legislators.

³⁶ COM(2016) 468 final.

4 Way forward

As stressed by President Juncker in his State of the Union speech, solidarity is the glue that keeps the Union together and is often most readily shown when faced with emergencies. Greece and Italy still face an emergency situation that requires the continued expression of solidarity from all Member States.

Heads of State or Government have repeatedly recognised in different fora the urgency of the situation and have called for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation scheme as an essential expression of this solidarity.

The Commission acknowledges that significant efforts have been made, which are reflected in the gradually increasing rate of relocation, notably in the case of Greece. Greece has successfully finalised a complex pre-registration exercise that has helped persons in the mainland seeking international protection be identified. Now Greece is taking the necessary steps to ensure the swift processing of relocation applicants within four to five months. Italy has continued to increase its processing capacity and showed flexibility to the demands of the Member States of relocation regarding security issues. UNHCR, IOM, EASO, Frontex and Europol are all increasing their support to Italy and Greece to accelerate the relocation procedure. Some Member States are truly committed to relocation and significantly contributed to the positive trends observed in the last months.

However, the results achieved do not yet measure up to the commitments taken and the scale of the challenges faced. The calls made by the Heads of State or Government must be matched with determined action now by the competent national services on the ground.

The Commission considered in its First Report on Relocation and Resettlement³⁷ that at least 6,000 relocations should be completed per month. This target remains valid as the Council Decisions on relocation enter their second year of implementation. Meeting legal obligations under the Council Decisions will require a substantial increase in the number and regularity of pledges and an acceleration in relocation in the coming months. The Commission therefore urges Member States to fully comply with these obligations.

To that end, the Commission calls on Member States to pledge and relocate regularly in accordance with their allocation both from Italy and Greece, and to nominate experts to respond to EASO's various calls ensuring longer deployments and more senior and specialised profiles. Those Member States who have not yet made any pledges, or have not yet relocated anyone, should do so without delay.

For their part, Greece and Italy should continue increasing their processing capacity. Greece should also establish as soon as possible the remaining relocation centres and Italy implement the first relocations of unaccompanied minors.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor and report regularly on the implementation of the two Council Decisions on relocation. The Commission reserves the right to take action against those Member States not complying with their obligations.

³⁷ COM(2016) 165 final.

In parallel, Member States should continue delivering on their resettlement commitments, including as part of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement.³⁸

³⁸ Third Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, COM(2016) 634 .