

Relocation and Resettlement: Commission calls on all Member States to deliver and meet obligations

As a result of the increased efforts of Member States, the number of persons relocated so far in 2017 is almost as many as in the whole of 2016. The total number of relocations now stands at 18,418, proving that relocation works if there is the will to abide by what was agreed together in a spirit of sincere cooperation. However, whilst most Member States are active and relocate regularly, some have still not relocated at all, disregarding their legal obligation. On resettlement, Members States have continued to make significant progress, with safe and legal pathways being provided to 16,163 persons so far, beyond two thirds of the agreed resettlements under the EU scheme. Building on the recommendations from the previous month, today's report is in particular focusing on those Member States that are not delivering on their commitments.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The results so far prove that if there is will and determination of Member States, relocation can work. The success of the relocation scheme cannot depend only on just a few. Solidarity in legal, political and moral terms is not susceptible to different interpretations. I call on those Member States who have systematically failed to deliver on their obligations to start doing so at once. The overall figures on resettlement show what strengthened EU-level cooperation and coordination can do in practice, and it is high time we achieved the same for relocation."*

Relocation

The positive trend on relocation has continued with an additional 2,078 persons relocated since the last report (1,368 from Greece and 710 from Italy). As of 12 May, 18,418 relocations have been carried out in total; 5,711 from Italy and 12,707 from Greece. However, despite the continuing positive progress, the current pace of relocation is still below what is needed to meet the targets set to ensure that all those eligible are relocated over the coming months.

Whereas in Greece the current number of 12,400 relocation applicants registered is expected to remain stable, Italy still needs to ensure that all persons eligible for relocation are registered. In addition to the 2,500 relocation candidates currently registered in Italy, 700 persons are expected to be registered soon as well as the more than 1,100 Eritreans who have arrived in Italy in 2017. However, with the total number of people eligible for relocation present in the two countries being well below what was foreseen in the Council Decisions and taking into account the progress registered so far, it is perfectly achievable to relocate all those eligible by September 2017 if Member States demonstrate the political will and determined action to deliver on what they have jointly agreed. In any case,

the legal obligation to relocate those eligible in Greece and Italy will not cease after September.

Although most Member States are now active and pledging and relocating regularly, **Hungary, Poland and Austria** remain the only Member States that have not relocated a single person. This is in breach of their legal obligations, the commitments taken towards Greece and Italy and the fair sharing of responsibility. **Austria** has however formally pledged to relocate 50 persons from Italy, a decision which the Commission welcomes. Moreover, the **Czech Republic** has not been active in the scheme for almost a year.

In this respect, the recommendations in today's report focus mainly on those Member States that have not yet implemented the Council Decisions, notably calling on **Hungary** and **Poland** to start pledging and relocating immediately, the **Czech Republic** to restart relocation without delay and **Austria**, which has now started pledging from Italy, to start pledging from Greece.

Recommendations are also addressed to encourage a more effective implementation of the Council decisions in other Member States:

- **Bulgaria** and **Slovakia** should show more flexibility as regards their preferences and should start relocating from Italy as soon as possible;
- **Ireland** and **Estonia**, in cooperation with **Italy**, should find mutually acceptable solutions on additional security interviews in order for relocations to start as soon as possible;
- A number of Member States should increase their monthly pledges (**Spain, Belgium** and **Croatia** for both **Italy** and **Greece**; **Germany, Romania** and **Slovakia** for **Greece** and **France** for Italy) while **Cyprus** should start pledging again for Italy and relocating as soon as possible;
- Relocating Member States as a whole should increase their capacity to process application requests, avoid overly restrictive preferences and delays and limit requirements causing delays in the transfer procedure and give priority to applications concerning vulnerable applicants, in particular unaccompanied minors;
- In addition, **Italy** should urgently speed up the procedures to identify and register all eligible applicants as soon as possible and ensure that those eligible for relocation arriving in Italy are channelled in an orderly manner to specifically designated relocation hubs. For this purpose, the Commission recently provided €15.33 million in emergency assistance to improve the functioning of the relocation scheme in Italy.

The Commission calls on Member States to follow up its recommendations and significantly accelerate their relocation efforts in a spirit of mutual cooperation and trust before the next report in June 2017. Moreover, the Commission urges those Member States that have not relocated anyone, or that have not pledged for Italy and Greece for almost a year, to start doing so immediately and within the next month. If no action is taken, the Commission will then specify in its next report in June its position on making use of its powers under the Treaties and in particular on the opening of infringement procedures. The Commission stands ready to assist Member States in making progress towards meeting their obligations.

Resettlement

The resettlement scheme as a whole remains on track. With 16,163 persons resettled to 21 countries^[11] as of 12 May, more than two thirds of the agreed 22,504 resettlements under the EU resettlement scheme have already been carried out. Since 10 April 2017, 671 people have been resettled; mainly from Turkey, but also from Jordan and Lebanon. This represents important progress when compared to the limited numbers Member States resettled in 2014 and 2015 via national or multilateral schemes and clearly demonstrates the added value and potential of strengthened EU-level cooperation and coordination on resettlement.

However, while some Member States and Associated Countries have already fulfilled their targets (namely Estonia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland), resettlement efforts remain uneven. Nine Member States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) have yet to start resettling within the ongoing EU-level schemes.

The pace of resettlements from Turkey, included in the overall figure of resettlement, continues to advance well with 1,077 Syrians having been resettled since the last report. A total of 5,695 Syrian refugees have now been provided with safe and legal passage to Europe under the EU-Turkey Statement. The overall number of remaining pledges for resettlement from Turkey now stands at 25,040 while Romania is preparing to resettle shortly via this mechanism for the first time.

Whilst significant progress has been achieved, Member States who are still far from reaching their targets and those Member States who have not yet resettled under the EU schemes should step up their efforts to resettle as soon as possible to contribute to the joint efforts to provide safe and legal pathways to the EU for persons in need of international protection and to implement the EU-Turkey Statement.

Background

The temporary emergency relocation scheme was established in two Council Decisions in September 2015, in which Member States committed to relocate persons in need of international protection from Italy and Greece. The relocation decisions concern the commitment to relocate 98,255 people, after the Council adopted an amendment to the 2nd Council Decision on relocation on 29 September 2016 to make 54,000 places not yet allocated available for the purpose of legally admitting Syrians from Turkey to the EU.

On 8 June 2015, the Commission adopted a proposal on a European Resettlement Scheme, which was followed by an agreement among the Member States on 20 July 2015 to resettle 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection.

The [European Council on 7 March 2016](#) called for an acceleration of the implementation of relocation in order to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Greece. In its [conclusions of 20 and 21 October](#), the European Council reiterated its call for further action to accelerate the implementation of

the relocation and resettlement schemes in light of the urgent need to provide support to Greece and Italy. The [European Council on 15 December](#) endorsed the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, which included the relocation target for Greece of 3,000 monthly transfers and reiterated its call to further intensify efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied minors, and existing resettlement schemes.

The EU Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 provides that for every Syrian being returned from Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU. This principle applies as of 4 April 2016. Priority is given to migrants who have not previously entered or tried to enter the EU irregularly.

The Commission on 13 July 2016 proposed a permanent [EU Resettlement Framework](#) to establish a common set of standard procedures for the selection of resettlement candidates and a common protection status for persons resettled to the EU to streamline and better focus European resettlement efforts in the future.

The Commission adopted on 16 March 2016 the First Report on Relocation and Resettlement. The Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Reports were adopted respectively on [12 April, 18 May, 15 June, 13 July, 28 September, 9 November, 8 December 2016, 28 February, 2 March](#) and [12 April 2017](#).

For More Information

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

[Annex 1: Relocations from Greece](#)

[Annex 2: Relocations from Italy](#)

[Annex 3: Relocations from Italy and Greece](#)

[Annex 4: Resettlement State of Play](#)

[FACTSHEET: Relocation and Resettlement](#)

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

[The European Agenda on Migration](#)

[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](#)

[Council Decision \(EU\) 2016/1754 of 29 September 2016 amending Decision \(EU\) 2015/1601 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece](#)

[Council Conclusions on Resettlement of 20,000 persons in need of](#)

[international protection](#)

[EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016](#)

[\[11\]](#) 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

Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and to end trade in raw ivory

Today's decision, foreseen in the [EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking](#), will help to prevent that legal ivory trade fuels international ivory trafficking, which has risen significantly over the last decade.

The European Commission will also grant new financial support of € 2.25 million to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to help with the implementation of the decisions on international wildlife trade agreed at the [CITES Conference of Parties](#) in October 2016.

Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** said: "*Fighting international ivory trafficking is a battle we can't afford to lose. By ending the export of ivory tusks and other raw ivory we are living up to our responsibility. And we are delivering on the next commitment in our Action Plan against wildlife trafficking. Our financial support for developing countries will strengthen their capacity to implement the CITES Convention. This is essential to achieve progress in the fight against poaching and for sustainable wildlife trade.*"

The legal export of old ivory items from the EU to Asia has risen since 2012 to a level where it could fuel the global demand for ivory and be used as a cover for illegal ivory trade. This is especially the case for ivory tusks, which represent the largest share of trafficked ivory. To address this problem, the Commission has adopted today's guidance document recommending that, as of 1 July 2017, EU Member States stop issuing export documents for raw ivory. In practical terms this means an end to the export of raw ivory, except for scientific and educational specimen. In addition, the guidance document, produced in close collaboration with Member States, sets out that the latter should interpret rules strictly when authorising other trade in ivory ensuring that the ivory items are of legal origin.

The EU has already very strict rules on ivory trade. Under these rules, ivory trade is banned, except for items acquired before 1990, when all African

elephants obtained the maximum protection under CITES.

The adoption of guidance on ivory trade corresponds to a commitment taken by the EU and its Member States as part of the Wildlife Trafficking Action Plan adopted in 2016. It also responds to calls from the European Parliament and civil society. In the coming months, the Commission will gather data and consult with stakeholders and the public to see if further restrictions on ivory trade are necessary.

Background

Despite an international ivory ban, elephant poaching and ivory trafficking have reached record levels. It is estimated that between 20 000 and 30 000 African elephants are poached every year. Ivory seizures amount to more than 40 tonnes in 2015. The rising demand for ivory products in Asia is one of the main reasons for this surge in trafficking.

The EU has been a longstanding supporter of the CITES Convention, which regulates international trade in about 35 000 animal and plant species. Important decisions against wildlife trafficking were adopted by the 183 CITES Parties at their last meeting in October 2016. The 2.25 million € to be provided to the CITES Secretariat will help implementing these decisions. The money will be used to help CITES Parties ensure that international trade in endangered marine species (sharks, rays or eels) is legal and sustainable, to address concerns linked to fraudulent trade in animals bred in captivity and improve the capacity of developing countries to fulfil their obligations under the CITES Convention. These funds come in addition to many other programmes supported by the EU against wildlife trafficking, such as the Minimising the Illegal Killing of Elephants and other Endangered Species programme or the [UNODC-CITES Asia Wildlife Enforcement and Demand Management Project](#). The EU plans to step up its financial assistance and capacity-building support against wildlife trafficking in the coming months.

For More Information

[Memo on Ivory Trade](#)

[Guidance document](#)

[The Action Plan and the Staff Working Document](#)

53/2017 : 16 May 2017 – Judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-682/15

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**54/2017 : 16 May 2017 – Judgment of
the General Court in case T-122/15**

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52/2017 : 16 May 2017 – Opinión 2/15

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