



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 08.03.2017
C(2017) 1520 final*

*Mr Pietro GRASSO
President of the Senato della Repubblica
Piazza Madama, 1
IT – 00186 ROMA*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 {COM(2016) 271 final}.

The European Union needs to enhance its ability to address the challenges arising from the current, unprecedented migratory pressure in full respect of the safeguards enshrined in international agreements.

Following the presentation of its European Agenda on Migration,¹ the Commission set out its priorities to reform the Common European Asylum System in the Communication adopted in April 2016: 'Towards a reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhancing legal avenues to Europe'². As a result, the Commission presented two sets of proposals for the reform of the Common European Asylum System on 4 May 2016 and 13 July 2016. The proposal to transform the European Asylum Support Office into a fully-fledged EU Asylum Agency is part of this broad package of ambitious measures.

In this light, the Commission welcomes the positive remarks of the Senato della Repubblica that the proposal would provide the necessary operational and technical assistance to Member States, particularly in situations of disproportionate pressure. By becoming more operational and by developing into a centre of expertise on asylum, the Agency will be better placed to assist Member States in addressing any shortcomings in their asylum systems, to increase practical cooperation and information exchange, to monitor the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, and provide guidance to ensure the convergence in the assessment of applications for international protection.

¹ COM(2015) 240 final.

² COM(2016) 197 final.

The proposal presented by the Commission is currently in the legislative process involving both the European Parliament and the Council. The Commission remains hopeful that an agreement will be reached in the near future.

In the meantime, the Commission is successfully pursuing its work to implement the various strands of the European Agenda on Migration. With the support of the Commission's officers, other EU agencies and international organisations, the fingerprinting of migrants arrived in Italy and Greece is now close to 100%. Over the last two months, there has also been a significant increase in the number of persons effectively relocated from Italy and Greece reaching 10 000 relocations as of mid-January. Moreover, the external borders are now better secured thanks to the operationalization of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in record time³. The Commission agrees that all these efforts are crucial and need to be intensified to address the challenges of effectively and comprehensively managing unprecedented migratory flows.

The Commission would like to once again thank the Senato della Repubblica for the support expressed in its Opinion and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Dimitri Avramopoulos
Member of the Commission*

³ COM(2017) 42 final.