



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Ms Regina BASTOS
Chair of the European Affairs Committee
Assembleia da República
Palácio de S. Bento
P – 1249-068 LISBOA*

*cc. Mr Eduardo FERRO RODRIGUES
President of the Assembleia da República
Palácio de S. Bento
P – 1249-068 LISBOA*

Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Assembleia da República for its Opinion on the proposal revising the Dublin Regulation {COM(2016) 270 final}, the proposal for a Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 {COM(2016) 271 final}; the proposal revising the 'Eurodac' {COM(2016) 272 final}; and on the Communication from the Commission "Towards a Reform of the Common European Asylum System And Enhancing Legal Avenues To Europe" {COM(2016) 197 final}.

The Commission takes note of the Assembleia da República's concerns regarding the need for the Union to have a balanced policy on migration management. In its European Agenda on Migration of May 2015¹, the Commission set out a comprehensive policy on migration management consisting of reducing incentives for irregular migration, securing external borders and saving lives, a strong asylum policy and a new policy on legal migration. Since then, the Commission has been consistently working to deliver on all aspects of that Agenda. The Commission believes that only a comprehensive and holistic strategy can effectively enhance the EU's ability to address to the short- and long-term challenges arising from such an unprecedented migratory pressure.

On the one hand, better securing the external borders and improving the effectiveness of the EU return system are essential steps to combat irregular migration and ensure better protection for those migrants in real need of international protection. In this context, significant efforts have been undertaken through the establishment of a European Border and Coast Guard Agency, through the adoption of the Action Plan on Return, and through increased cooperation with countries of origin and transit, including on readmission, in the context of the new Partnership Frameworks.

¹ COM(2015) 240 final.

On the other hand, the Commission has been consistently working to reform the Common European Asylum System. In April 2016, the Commission set out priorities for a structural reform of the Common European Asylum System in its Communication 'Towards a reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhancing legal avenues to Europe'² and presented two sets of proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System on 4 May 2016 and 13 July 2016. The first set of proposals constitute a first package of measures intended to establish a sustainable and fair system for determining the Member State responsible for asylum seekers, to reinforce the Eurodac system and to develop an enhanced mandate for the European Asylum Support Office in view of preventing secondary movements and achieving greater convergence in the asylum procedures throughout the EU.

Moreover, the Commission would like to take this opportunity to recall that progress has been made as regards the relocation and resettlement schemes which show the EU's endeavours to alleviate the migratory pressure from Italy and Greece, and to offer legal and safe pathways to Europe for migrants with well-founded international protection needs. To date, nearly 13,546 individuals have already been relocated while 14,422 out of the targeted 22,504 persons under the July 2015 scheme have been successfully resettled³.

Finally, the Commission also notes that the Assembleia da República is concerned about the compliance of the Union's asylum and migration policy with international obligations and the respect of human rights. The Commission assures that its proposals respect fundamental rights and observe the principles recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the obligations stemming from international law, in particular the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Convention against Torture and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The proposals presented by the Commission, reflecting the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, are 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.

The Commission is grateful for the Opinion of the Assembleia da República and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Dimitris Avramopoulos
Member of the Commission*

² COM(2016) 197 final.

³ COM(2017) 202 final.