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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

Progress report on the implementation of the hotspot approach in Greece

As part of the immediate action to assist Member States facing intense migratory pressures at the EU's external borders, the European Agenda on Migration adopted in May 2015 set out a new hotspot approach¹. Greece and Italy are the two Member States where this hotspot approach is currently being implemented.

Under this approach, all relevant EU Agencies and experts from Member States work on the ground with national and local authorities to help the Member States concerned to fulfil their obligations under EU law. Five key areas have been identified: establishing functional hotspots, implementing the relocation decisions, ensuring the effective return of migrants not entitled to international protection, improving border management, and creating sufficient and adequate reception capacity.

In September 2015, the Commission took this one step further by outlining the priority actions for the EU to address the refugee crisis². These included the full rollout of the relocation scheme and migration management support teams working in 'hotspot' areas. The Commission followed this up with a report on the state of play in October³. This included detailed information on the next steps needed in the key areas, including specific actions to be implemented by Greece.

In December 2015, the Commission issued a detailed report on the implementation of the hotspot approach in Greece in the five areas mentioned above⁴. On 10 February, the Commission reported on the overall implementation of the priority actions⁵, and annexed a state of play report on Greece.

To support Greece implementing the priority actions, the EU has shown firm solidarity with Greece through the substantial financial support provided to the country, in particular during the last months. In addition to Greece's overall allocation under its national programmes for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which amounts to €509 million for the period 2014-2020, substantial emergency assistance of approximately €150 million under both AMIF and ISF has also been awarded in the last year. Under the national programmes, pre-financing payments amounting to around €70 million (€33 million for 2014/15 and €37 million for 2016) have been made, and for the emergency assistance pre-financing payments of approximately €70.3 million were made available.

Putting together the allocation under its national programmes and the emergency assistance provided to the benefit of the country so far, Greece is the first beneficiary of EU funding in the area of Home Affairs, with an overall amount of some €660 million. Greece should make best use of all the resources available under the national programmes and should also fully exploit the possibilities offered by other EU funding mechanisms such as ESIF (Structural and Investment Funds).

¹ Communication from the Commission "A European Agenda on Migration" (COM(2015) 240, 13 May 2015).

² Communication from the Commission "Managing the refugee crisis: immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration" (COM(2015) 490, 23 September 2015).

³ Communication from the Commission "Managing the refugee crisis: State of play of the implementation of the priority actions under the European Agenda on Migration" (COM(2015) 510, 14 October 2015).

⁴ Communication from the Commission "Progress Report on the Implementation of the hotspots in Greece" (COM(2015) 678, 15 December 2015).

⁵ Communication from the Commission "State of Play of the implementation of the priority actions under the European Agenda on Migration (COM(2016) 85, 10 February 2016).

The annex to this report updates the 10th February analysis, taking stock of the implementation of the priority actions in the five areas set above and the steps which remain to be taken.

Annex:

Recommendation December 2015		Status
Hotspot Areas	Greece needs to complete the construction of the hotspots at Lesvos, Leros and Chios, in line with the planned timetable. Construction works at Kos should commence immediately and a location in Samos should be identified in order to roll-out the hotspot by end of January.	✓ Four hotspots (Lesvos, Chios, Samos and Leros) are operational with the assistance and temporary coordination of the Army, although several actions still needed to be completed to make them function at full speed (e.g. third line of registration in Lesvos, completion of accommodation in Samos, certain services in Leros and Samos, etc.). X Works have started in Kos (Pyli former camp) and the hotspot could be partly operational by 4 March. X The national procurement procedure for the services necessary for the operation of the hotspots (namely catering, cleaning) has not yet been finalised. The Greek Army is in the process of launching this week expedited procurement for the following services: transportation, catering, medical services, cleaning for all hotspots and reception and reception centers.

Recommendation December 2015	Status
	<p>Greece should, in collaboration with the European Commission, EU agencies, and UNHCR, optimise the organisation of the hotspots based on an island by island evaluation of the needs and drawing on the findings of the inter-Agency pilot project. In this context, a structured system for disembarkation at official disembarkation points as well as transportation to the hotspot areas should be established.</p> <p>✓ Coastal Patrol Teams have been deployed by Frontex in Lesbos, Chios and Samos. In Leros, the disembarkation procedures are undertaken in a controlled manner: almost 100% of arrivals are taking place at Farmakonisi island and subsequently migrants are transferred to Leros by Coast Guard and FRONTEX officers.</p> <p>✓ In the short term the local authorities have assumed responsibility for the coordination of transportation of migrants from disembarkation points to the registration centres and from the registration centres to the ports.</p> <p>X The government has committed to table the framework legal act (in the form of an amendment of Law 3907/2011) concerning the establishment and coordination mechanisms of the hotspots in Parliament in the week of 7 March. Once the legal framework act is in place, the Standard Operating Procedures will be adopted through a common ministerial decision which will define roles and procedures in the management of the hotspots.</p> <p>X A sufficient number of buses should be swiftly made available in order to further upgrade the disembarkation system on the islands. Member States should respond urgently to the request for buses under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).</p> <p>X Transportation of those who are not in need of international protection from the hotspots areas directly to available detention facilities needs to be established.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>On the basis of a refined needs assessment, Member States should make available the necessary experts in order to ensure the full roll-out of the hotspots as soon as construction works are concluded. Greece should in turn ensure that a sufficient number of team leaders are deployed and should ensure that sufficient security personnel are present in the hotspot areas.</p>	<p>X The Hellenic Police should increase further its presence in the hotspots facilities in order to ensure the security of the facilities and of the personnel of the agencies deployed. X Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) have increased their presence (currently at 516 and 14 officers respectively), but more experts are still needed especially since additional hotspots are operational. Member States have not provided sufficient experts. X Greece should complete the process of providing team leaders</p>
<p>Greece should procure – without further delay and making use of accelerated/simplified procedures provided for in Directives 2004/18/EC and 2014/24/EU in case of "urgency" or "extreme urgency" – the necessary additional fingerprinting machines.</p>	<p>In terms of registration (Eurodac): ✓ A first wave of 25 fingerprinting stations has been ordered by EASO. This batch has already been delivered. A second wave of 65 fingerprinting stations have been ordered by EASO and are being delivered. ✓ 6 fingerprinting stations have been procured by the Hellenic Police and have been deployed in Lesbos. ✓ Both the Commission and Frontex have observed that significant progress has been made since September 2015 and at this time all migrants over 14 referred to the hot spots are registered in line with the Schengen Borders Code X The connections of the Eurodac stations to the IT network, and the central server capacity, are not yet secure and reliable. The Commission and EU-LISA are supporting the Hellenic Police in improving the functionality of its IT systems and in order to enhance its capacity to fully support the registration system.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>IT systems should be updated to first deploy a fully-fledged Automated Fingerprinting Identification System (AFIS) and then to ensure that interconnections between national and EU/international databases are established, thereby allowing for a full check of arriving migrants against Schengen Information System (SIS) II/Interpol Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (STLD) databases.</p>	<p>In terms of security checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In hotspots, terminals are now technically available to allow checks against SIS, Interpol and Europol database in addition to the national police database of third country nationals. ✓ A request has been submitted to Europol in order to ensure access to its database for security checks purposes. ✓ The single automated access system to the relevant security databases (national, SIS and Interpol), has started operating in all hotspots. X Systematic checks against these databases need to be fully established with the relevant follow-up. A full Automated Fingerprint Identification System should be further developed.
<p>Greece, with the support of the European Commission and EU Agencies, should define the needs in terms of cultural mediators/interpreters and strengthen their presence in the hotspot areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X The Greek authorities should define their needs in terms of cultural mediators/interpreters. X The Greek authorities should put a pool of interpreters in place, possibly through a framework contract in order to be able to provide interpretation services at short notice.
<p>Coordination needs to be further improved by making systematic and effective use of the coordination mechanisms that have been put in place. Appointed coordinators for the islands should be empowered by way of dedicated Terms of Reference to coordinate all relevant governmental and non-governmental players involved in the hotspot locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The draft act establishing the hotspots (see above) will include dedicated provisions for the appointment of hotspots coordinators, police coordinators and special coordinators to manage the relationship with all the stakeholders involved in the hotspot procedure. X Once the new legislation is in place, the Greek authorities need to swiftly follow the relevant procedure in order to appoint the permanent coordinators for hotspots foreseen under the newly adopted legislation.

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>EUROPOL should strengthen its presence in Greece and should conclude operational agreements with the Greek authorities in order to support them in fighting smuggling. Support should include the launch of financial investigations, actions against document fraud, and better use of Immigration Liaison Officers (ILO) networks in third countries as sources of relevant information.</p>	<p>✓ A Europol liaison officer is present in Lesvos as well as in EU Regional Task Force in Piraeus.</p> <p>✓ Advanced Level Document experts (ALDO) have been deployed by Frontex in all hotspot areas alongside dedicated equipment for the detection of fraudulent documents.</p> <p>X The Hellenic Police has decided to use a new and more sophisticated registration document, including security features, to be used in all hotspots. However, although a new stamp is already used, there is as yet insufficient security paper</p> <p>X Greece should procure more equipment to detect document fraud. It is expected that a request for funding will be submitted in this regard.</p> <p>X The Greek authorities need to ensure appropriate follow-up on cases of detected fraudulent documents and strengthen law enforcement operations on the islands to curtail the smuggling business.</p>
<p>The Hellenic Police should provide training to police officers placed in the hotspots for forged document identification.</p>	<p>X Still under consideration.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>Relocation</p> <p>Information provision to refugees about the relocation programme needs to be stepped up, inter alia by increasing the presence of the staff of the Greek Asylum Service and of EASO in the hotspots as well as by producing and distributing information material to potential relocation candidates about the relocation process and their rights and duties in that context. The Member States Liaison Officers should provide relocation candidates with information on the assigned destination countries, including on their asylum and reception systems.</p>	<p>✓ The Asylum Service is active in Lesvos and Samos. EASO has deployed experts in Samos for the provision of information including information leaflets.</p> <p>X Information to migrants regarding their rights as asylum applicants and their rights and obligations under the relocation scheme should be systematically provided in all hotspots. The Asylum Service and EASO should deploy experts for this purpose in the remaining hotspot locations.</p> <p>X More Member States should provide information packages for people to be relocated (only a few Member States (Belgium, Ireland, Poland and Portugal) have produced such information so far). EASO is also leading a process for the co-ordination of pre-departure information by Member States of Relocation (guidance being drafted).</p>
<p>The capacity to register and process asylum applications needs to be substantially increased. To this end, the Greek Asylum Service intends to hire 40 additional staff by mid-February which should increase its capacity to be able to register 100-120 applications per day. Further staff increases are needed to step up the registration as required.</p>	<p>✓ EASO is supporting the Greek authorities in Lesvos and Samos to screen the nationalities of the applicants for relocation.</p> <p>✓ 37 persons will be recruited by April and an additional (up to) 40 persons in June 2016. The remaining posts foreseen will be recruited in January 2017. The necessary funding is secured through emergency funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).</p> <p>✓ A pilot project to increase registration capacity is also starting in the coming days with the support of EASO</p>
<p>Member States should substantially reduce the response time to relocation requests submitted by the Greek authorities (and refrain from excessive ad hoc checks taking place in Greece).</p>	<p>X Responses of Member States to relocation requests continue also to be slow and this is in part the reason for a significant withdrawal rate from the relocation process.</p> <p>X Member States do not provide adequate information in advance concerning their relocation planning. This is absolutely necessary in order to allow the Greek authorities to increase the efficiency of the process.</p> <p>X Several Member States request systematic security interviews to be performed.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>Member States should substantially increase their pledges under the relocation programme.</p>	<p>X Insufficient pledges and number of persons relocated: By 2nd March, only 16 Member States had made relocation pledges to Greece. It should also be noted that during the last couple of weeks, pledges from MS have considerably increased, and currently exceed the number of applicants eligible for relocation registered by Greece.</p>
<p><i>Additional measures identified after the adoption of the Communication in December</i></p>	
<p>A total of 123 relocation applicants have absconded and 88 withdrew their application since the start of the scheme</p>	<p>X Greece should make sure that asylum applicants to be relocated are gathered in dedicated facilities where their cases can be closely followed. X Member States should finalise, in collaboration with EASO, targeted information packages. These should be provided to asylum applicants who are to be relocated upon notification of their country of destination (see above).</p>
<p>One Unaccompanied Minor has been transferred to Finland. 10 requests are still pending, 3 of which have been accepted by Finland again since the inception of the relocation process</p>	<p>X Greece should finalise dedicated procedures for the transfer of Unaccompanied Minors. X Member States should pledge dedicated places for Unaccompanied Minors.</p>
<p>Some Member States have invoked criteria other than those foreseen in the Council Decision to reject relocation files.</p>	<p>X Member States should strictly apply the criteria foreseen under the Council Decision when rejecting relocation applications. In particular, relocation applications should not be rejected for reasons linked to the preferences expressed by the Member State concerning the profiles of the applicants to be relocated.</p>

Recommendation December 2015		Status
Return	<p>The Greek authorities need to develop a clear strategy for forced returns identifying priority third countries for engagement and addressing shortcomings in their detention system. Greece needs to streamline its administrative procedures in order to allow for swift return.</p>	<p>✓ Greece is using simplified procedures to issue return decisions to third country nationals not entitled to protection.</p> <p>✓ Frontex launched on 15 February an operational support plan to Greece, Italy and Bulgaria.</p> <p>X Greece, with the Commission and with the technical support of Frontex, should agree, as a matter of priority, on a clear implementation path for the operational plan for return and readmission activities, based on a clear planning and needs assessment by Greece, providing support to all elements in the execution of the return procedure, as necessary.</p> <p>X Greece should make full use of the possibilities offered by the Greek legislation in line with the Return Directive to maintain irregular migrants in detention up to the 18-month maximum limit to avoid that detention is ended before effective removal.</p> <p>X Greece should make full and swift use of the possibilities of support from EU-funded programmes on return, in particular EURINT, ERIN and Eurlo.</p>
	<p>Greece needs to step up forced and voluntary returns, as well as take the necessary steps to ensure the immediate absorption of the available AMIF national programme funding.</p>	<p>✓ An emergency Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme has been financed under AMIF supporting the voluntary return of 1,000 migrants . So far over 1,400 migrants have registered for voluntary departure.</p> <p>X The tendering procedure for the new AVR Programme to be financed under the AMIF national programme has been completed and the awarding process should be finalized as soon as possible</p> <p>X An emergency forced return programme (to be implemented by the Hellenic Police) has been financed under AMIF. However, the tendering procedure for transportation (provision of tickets) for forced return operations on commercial flights is ongoing and needs to be finalised as a matter of urgency.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>The return activities of the Greek authorities should focus more on the nationalities most relevant in the context of hotspots (Pakistanis, but also Afghans, Iranians and Bangladeshis), instead of the current focus on nationals of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.</p>	<p>X See above with regard to an operational plan. Such a plan should take into account the nationalities currently entering Greece as part of irregular migratory flows, which do not fall under a refugee- profile.</p>
<p>Information concerning Assisted Voluntary Returns should be promoted to migrants already while they stay in the hotspot areas. An outreach campaign should also be considered in areas close to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.</p>	<p>✓The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has opened dedicated offices in Lesvos and is present in Samos. X Dedicated arrival points should be urgently set up in other hotspots and in Central Greece for migrants who are returned from Idomeni in order to be offered the opportunity of AVR. X The IOM should be present in all detention centres in Greece to offer the AVR option to migrants to be returned.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>The European Commission, supported by Member States, should further step up engagement with third countries to ensure easier readmission of migrants which are not entitled to international protection. This also includes in particular further efforts to ensure readmission of third-country nationals by Turkey.</p>	<p>✓ The results of the recent exchanges with the Pakistani authorities were endorsed by the Joint Readmission Committee. As a priority, an important step is now to confirm concretely this positive step with new flights in the following weeks from Greece to Pakistan.</p> <p>✓ On 1-2 March, 267 irregular migrants were readmitted by Turkey.</p> <p>X However, the Greek authorities should enhance their efforts in particular by speeding up the readmission requests to Turkey and minimising the risk that migrants abscond during the procedure. Turkey should also collaborate more closely with the Greek authorities so that the number of migrants accepted for readmission and actually readmitted increases substantially (only 8 persons readmitted out of 5,148 requests accepted by Turkey in 2015).</p> <p>X Frontex, assisted by Member States, should make swift practical arrangements with Greece under the new operational plan in order to support with the timely submission of readmission requests to Turkey and transportation of migrants from the place where they are apprehended and/or in detention to one of the three places of departure agreed in the Greek-Turkish Protocol.</p> <p>X Greece should consider inviting Turkey to appoint a liaison officer to be deployed in Greece with the view of facilitating readmission requests.</p> <p>X Greece should ensure full physical availability of migrants accepted by Turkey for readmission (where necessary by means of timely pre-removal detention).</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
	<p>Frontex should ensure that joint return flights make regular stopovers in Greece in order to perform return operations.</p> <p>✓ Frontex, assisted by Member States, is coordinating and supporting all joint return operations with stopovers in Greece. ✓ A Frontex joint return operation to Pakistan, with a stopover in Greece, is planned for 16 March, as a first step in a series of new efforts to intensify Frontex joint return operations with involvement of Greece. X The Greek authorities need to report to Frontex their specific needs on a regular and timely basis in order for joint return operations to be planned and executed.</p>
	<p>Conditions in the detention centres need to be improved urgently.</p> <p>✓ The Greek authorities are proceeding with a Framework Contract for the provision of catering services for the closed pre-removal centres for 2016-2018. On the basis of legal provisions adopted on 29 January 2016, the Hellenic Police has undertaken to provide food until the relevant agreement is in place. X Beyond catering services, certain closed pre- removal facilities, in particular on the islands, should be refurbished where necessary and should be properly maintained, in order to provide appropriate accommodation to migrants in line with EU standards. Where considered necessary, new locations for detention centres on the islands should be identified and developed, in particular in view of swift readmission to Turkey.</p>
	<p>The European Commission, supported by Member States, should further step up engagement with third countries to ensure easier readmission of migrants which are not entitled to international protection including through the targeted use of the Trust Fund for Africa.</p> <p>✓ The Joint Committees on Readmission with Turkey and Pakistan were held on 19 January and 2 February 2016 respectively. The Commission visited Afghanistan and will visit Nigeria to discuss readmission.</p>

Recommendation December 2015		Status
Improving border management	Greek authorities and Frontex should swiftly define the operational details of the deployment of Frontex officers at the northern Greek border.	<p>✓ The Frontex operation on the Northern Greek border is ongoing. As had been agreed with Frontex, Greece has appointed 105 police officers, including 5 team leaders, to work alongside 25 Frontex officers. The refurbishment of the offices for the Frontex-Hellenic Police joint operations at the old railway station near Eidomeni has been completed.</p> <p>X So far Frontex has only been able to deploy 9 out of these 25 officers due to shortfalls in the pledges from Member States. A possible extension of the mandate of Frontex in this region would also require a further commitment from Member States.</p> <p>✓ Frontex will support the Greek authorities in verifying the identity of third country nationals and whether they have been registered in the relevant databases.</p>
	Further to the RABIT activation, Member States should immediately make available staff and equipment to ensure that the needs identified by Greece and Frontex are fully met.	<p>✓ The Rapid Intervention Poseidon in the Aegean islands has been launched on 28 December 2015. Currently there are 775 guest officers deployed under the operation (243 crew members, 248 fingerprinters, 53 screening experts, 30 advanced documents experts, 75 interpreters, 16 debriefing experts, 8 Frontex support officers, 31 team leaders, 71 coordination staff).</p> <p>X Member States' pledges have reached 83% of the necessary coverage.</p>
Reception capacity	Greece needs to rapidly complete the construction of all 7,000 places for all five hotspot islands	<p>✓ The places in the hotspots should be available alongside the completion of the construction works.</p>
	Greece needs to improve the reception of vulnerable groups, in particular unaccompanied minors.	<p>✓ UNICEF, the UNHCR and Save the Children have started a pilot project in Kos, Lesbos and Idomeni to provide dedicated care for minors. This is also intended to be extended to Samos and Leros.</p> <p>✓ Medical screening is foreseen in all hotspots as a final step in the registration procedure.</p> <p>X Greece should put in place adequate accommodation capacity for unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups, after they are transferred from the islands.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
More structural solutions need to be found regarding the provision of food and other basic needs in the reception facilities.	✓ The Greek authorities are proceeding with a Framework Contract for the provision of catering services for the reception facilities for 2016-2018.

Recommendation December 2015	Status
<p>Greece should continue to increase its reception capacity in line with the Western Balkans Leaders' meeting commitments.</p>	<p>✓ The total number of places that are currently available in reception facilities in Greece is 34,419 (excluding the UNHCR rental scheme). These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17,906 places in open reception facilities in the mainland (Elaionas, Elliniko, Attiko Alsos, Eidomeni, Orestiada, Schisto, Diavata, Nea Kavala, Cherso). While some of these facilities are only suitable for short-term stay, others are suitable for longer stay; • 1,221 places in dedicated facilities for asylum-seekers and unaccompanied minors in the mainland and the islands; • 5,500 places in reception facilities in the hotspots (including the 1,100 places in the reserve facility of Kara Tepe in Lesvos); • 4,433 other places in first-line reception facilities in the islands (outside the hotspots); • 5,359 places in pre-removal centres. <p>When the planned expansion of the Schisto and Diavata facilities is completed, the total number of places in reception facilities in Greece will reach 38,619 (excluding the UNHCR rental scheme).</p> <p>The UNHCR has signed implementing agreements with NGOs Praksis, Nostos, Iliaktida, Solidarity Now, and Arsis for the provision of a total of 16,250 places in 2016 in the context of the UNHCR rental scheme. In addition, negotiations are ongoing with the Municipality of Athens, Médecins du Monde, and the Greek Council for Refugees for the provision of an additional 1,880 places in 2016, bringing the total number of places to be established in 2016 to 18,130. A total of 2,788 places are currently available by NGO Praksis through the hotel voucher scheme and in apartments.</p> <p>The UNHCR should continue to conclude implementing agreements to reach the target of 20,000 places under the rental scheme as soon as possible.</p> <p>With the support of the European Commission and the UNHCR, Greece should continue to expand and upgrade its reception capacity in order to cater for the migrants and refugees in its territory.</p> <p>X With the support of the European Commission and the UNHCR, Greece should continue to expand and upgrade its reception capacity in order to cater for the migrants and refugees in its territory.</p>

Recommendation December 2015	Status
Member States should respond immediately to the EUCPM request for assistance.	X Only 9 Member States have offered in kind assistance in the context of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).