



# MANAGING THE REFUGEE CRISIS

## EU-TURKEY STATEMENT: PROGRESS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2016

### A JOINT RESPONSE

On 18 March 2016 EU Heads of State or Government agreed to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU by breaking the business model of the smugglers and offering migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk. The aim is to restore a legal and orderly admission system for those entitled to international protection in line with EU and international law.

**The implementation of the EU - Turkey Statement is delivering results:** Despite challenging circumstances, the EU-Turkey Statement had delivered steady results in the face of many challenges. A core goal of the Statement has been to break the business model of smugglers exploiting migrants and refugees taking the potentially fatal risk of irregular crossing from Turkey into Greece. The substantial fall in both crossings and fatalities since the entry into force of the Statement is testament to its effective delivery. In the weeks before the implementation of the Statement, around 1,740 migrants were crossing the Aegean Sea to the Greek islands every day. By contrast, the average daily arrivals since 21 March are down to 94. From over 270 fatalities in the Aegean Sea in 2015, the number of losses of lives has fallen to 11 since the Statement. So far, 1,614 Syrian refugees have been resettled from Turkey to Europe and the return of 578 irregular migrants has been carried out from the Greek islands to Turkey, in full respect of EU and international law.

However, as some individuals continue to make the crossing, while returns from Greece to Turkey proceed at a slow pace, additional pressure is put on the reception facilities on the Greek islands. While the overall scale of flows towards Greece remains far less than before the Statement, this deserves careful monitoring.



### CURRENT SITUATION

Since the Second Report in June 2016, the total numbers of arrivals from Turkey to the Greek islands was 9,250 - representing an average daily arrival of around 81. Although an increase was recorded in August, the numbers were still 97% lower than in August 2015.

### ENHANCED COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

The EU has provided unprecedented support to the Greek government in terms of expertise and advice logistics, materials and expertise from the EU budget. The **Commission's EU Coordinator** continues to ensure a day-to-day follow-up with the Greek and Turkish authorities, EU Agencies, international organisations, and other Member States. The EU Agencies are providing substantial and critical support.

As of 26 September the **European Asylum Support Office** had deployed 83 interpreters in Greece and 70 Member State experts, out of which 41 are deployed in the hotspots. Regarding border support, as of 25 September, Frontex had 699 officers deployed in Greece, including a total of 675 officers concerned with the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement. Nevertheless, for the period of September to December 2016, there are still shortfalls.

**Europol** has stationed 8 specialists in Greece to assist in investigations against migrant smuggling. In addition, 10 guest officers were recently seconded by Member States to carry out second-line security checks in the hotspots.

The EU is providing financial assistance to support the **Turkish Coast Guard** to prevent and better counter irregular migration flows, including the procurement of six search and rescue vessels, as well as linked training. The first vessels should be delivered in February 2017.

## EU FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO GREECE

To support the Greek authorities as well as international organisations and NGOs operating in Greece in managing the refugee and humanitarian crisis, **the Commission has awarded over €353 million in emergency assistance since the beginning of 2015** - making Greece the biggest beneficiary of Home Affairs funds. The emergency funding comes on top of the €509 million already allocated to Greece under the national programmes for 2014-2020 (€294,5 million from the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund and €214,7 million from the Internal Security Fund).

Greece has also been awarded €198 million to improve conditions for refugees in Greece from the new Emergency support instrument. Overall, the European Union is reaching over €1 billion of support to Greece in tackling the migration challenges.

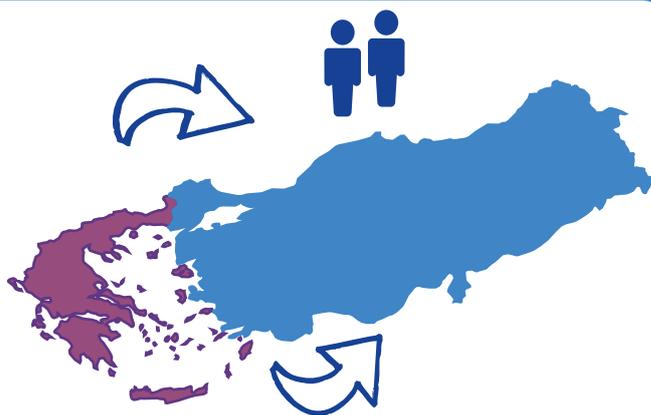
### KEY CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

- Member States should urgently increase their support to Greece through EU Agencies. The current shortfall of 59 experts for the European Asylum Support Office and shortages until the end of 2016 for Frontex must be filled before the European Council on 20-21 October. Experts should be deployed for longer periods to provide continuity.
- Cooperation needs to be deepened to optimise the use of intelligence by all EU, NATO, Greek and Turkish authorities.

## RETURN OF ALL NEW IRREGULAR MIGRANTS FROM GREECE TO TURKEY

Since 20 March, when the Statement became operational, a total of 578 persons who entered Greece irregularly have been returned to Turkey in the framework of the EU – Turkey Statement. In total, more than 1,600 irregular migrants have been returned from Greece to Turkey in the course of 2016.

All asylum applications are treated on a case-by-case basis. The implementation of the Statement is carried out strictly in accordance with the requirements of EU and international law and in full respect of the principle of *non-refoulement*.



## KEY CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

- Speeding up the processing of asylum applications from registration to appeal, in line with EU and international law
- Step-up urgently the pace of returns to Turkey of those whose asylum applications are deemed inadmissible or unfounded
- Increase reception capacity on the islands and transfer to the mainland those applicants who are referred to the regular asylum procedure or who have been granted the refugee status
- Scaling up and adjusting for winter reception capacities in the Greek islands
- Adoption by the Greek authorities of the Standard Operating Procedures for hotspots and nomination of permanent coordinators in hotspots

## “ONE FOR ONE” RESETTLEMENT FROM TURKEY TO THE EU

A total of **1614 Syrians have so far been resettled from Turkey to the EU**. As a result, the pace of re-settlement is considerably advanced compared to returns from the Greek islands. At this point in time, the number of Syrians resettled substantially exceeds the numbers returned under the EU-Turkey Statement.

## KEY CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

- Maintain the pace of resettlements
- Adoption by the Council of the Commission’s proposal concerning the 54,000 unallocated places

## VOLUNTARY HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION SCHEME

The EU-Turkey Statement stipulates that the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU are ending or at least have been substantially and sustainably reduced. The Standard Operating Procedures for the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme, developed in the Council in cooperation with the Commission, EASO, UNHCR and IOM, are being currently negotiated with Turkey.

## VISA LIBERALISATION



### The outstanding benchmarks are:

- Issuing biometric travel documents fully compatible with EU standards;
- Adopting the measure to prevent corruption foreseen by the Roadmap;
- Concluding an operational cooperation agreement with Europol;
- Revising legislation and practices on terrorism in line with European standards;
- Aligning legislation on personal data protection with EU standards;
- Offering effective judicial cooperation in criminal matters to all EU Member States;
- Implementing the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement in all its provisions.

The Commission has encouraged Turkey’s efforts to complete the delivery of all the outstanding benchmarks on the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap as soon as possible.

## THE FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY

The Facility for Refugees in Turkey manages a total of €3 billion for 2016 and 2017, and provides a joint coordination mechanism, designed to ensure that the needs of refugees and host communities in Turkey are addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The Facility focuses on humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure, and socio-economic support.

At the beginning of September, the Commission signed its largest ever humanitarian programme, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), worth €348 million. Starting in October, the ESSN will cover everyday needs of 1 million refugees across Turkey via a system of monthly transfers onto electronic debit cards.

In addition, under the non-humanitarian assistance envelope, the Commission signed at the end of September, two direct grants with the Turkish Ministries of National Education and Health, for an additional €600 million.

The total of contracted funds now stands at €1.252 billion. Further projects to help build schools, hospitals and utilities will be signed over the next few months under the Special Measure worth €1.4 billion adopted on 28 July 2016. To date, 34 projects have been contracted worth €1.252 billion, out of which €467 million has been disbursed. The total allocated for implementation under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey on humanitarian and non-humanitarian actions now stands at €2.239 billion.

Further information is available on the **Facility website** at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news\\_corner/migration/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/migration/index_en.htm)

## UPGRADING THE CUSTOMS UNION

Preparatory work paving the way to negotiations to modernise and extend the Customs Union is advancing well. The recent consultation saw strong support for upgrading the Customs Union and improving its functioning, and these findings are taken into account in an ongoing impact assessment that looks at options for the future. This will feed into a draft negotiating directive to be presented by the Commission by the end of 2016.

## ACCESSION PROCESS

Accession negotiations on Chapter 33 (financial and budgetary provisions) were opened on 30 June in accordance with the EU-Turkey Statement. Preparatory work continues to make progress on five other Chapters, without prejudice to Member States' positions in accordance with the existing rules.

In the key areas of judiciary and fundamental rights, and justice, freedom and security (Chapters 23 and 24), the Commission is updating the documents to take account of the latest developments. These chapters cover a range of critical issues including fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, judiciary, anti-corruption policy, migration and asylum, visa rules, border management, police cooperation, and the fight against organised crime and terrorism. The EU expects Turkey to respect the highest standards when it comes to democracy, rule of law and respect of fundamental freedoms. For the chapters on energy (Chapter 15), education and culture (Chapter 26), and foreign, security and defence policy (Chapter 31), preparatory documents have already been tabled in the Council earlier this year.

## HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS INSIDE SYRIA

The EU and Turkey have both continued to deploy substantial resources for the humanitarian response in Syria and have worked together to promote full and unimpeded access throughout Syria. The EU will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to people across Syria, and has allocated an initial €140 million for life-saving activities for 2016. This funding will support sectors such as health, hygiene, protection and first line response to quickly respond to emergencies and new displacements, with continued priority to besieged, hard-to-reach and prone to displacement areas.