



THE HOTSPOT APPROACH TO MANAGING EXCEPTIONAL MIGRATORY FLOWS

What is a Hotspot?

As part of the immediate action to assist frontline Member States which are facing disproportionate migratory pressures at the EU's external borders, in the European Agenda on Migration presented in May, the European Commission proposed to develop a new Hotspot approach.

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), EU Border Agency (Frontex) EU Police Cooperation Agency (Europol) and EU Judicial Cooperation Agency (Eurojust) will work on the ground with the authorities of the frontline Member State to help to fulfil their obligations under EU law and swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants. The work of the agencies will be complementary to one another.

The Hotspot approach will also contribute to the implementation of the temporary relocation schemes proposed by the European Commission on 27 May and 9 September: people in clear need of international protection will be identified in frontline Member States for relocation to other EU Member States where their asylum application will be processed.

Italy and Greece are the first two Member States where this Hotspot approach is currently being implemented. Other Member States can also benefit from the Hotspot approach upon request.

What support and resources are provided?

The operational support provided under the Hotspot approach, will concentrate on registration, identification, fingerprinting and debriefing of asylum seekers, as well as return operations. Those claiming asylum will be immediately channelled into an asylum procedure where EASO support teams will help to process asylum applications as quickly as possible. For those who are not in need of protection, Frontex will help Member States by coordinating the return of irregular migrants. Europol and Eurojust will assist the host Member State with investigations to dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks.

In Italy, Frontex currently deploys 11 screening experts and 22 debriefing experts. Their number and location varies with operational needs. Frontex will also provide 12 operators

for fingerprinting. As regards return, Italy and Frontex are assessing the support that can be concretely provided by the Agency. EASO has 45 experts ready to be deployed to Italy.

Frontex is already present on the ground in Greece for Joint Operation Poseidon. Frontex has deployed 4 screening experts and 8 debriefing experts on the Greek islands. It has also deployed 8 interpreters, 2 advance-level document experts 2 first-line officers, 3 Frontex support officers and 4 team leaders. EASO presented a draft Hotspot Operational Plan to the Greek authorities in which it proposes to deploy 28 experts.

In addition to these resources, Europol and Eurojust will provide support to both Member States.

Where are the Hotspots?

In Italy, the regional headquarters in Catania (Sicily) is coordinating the work in four ports which have been identified as Hotspots, namely Pozzallo, Porto Empedocle and Trapani in Sicily and Lampedusa. In each of these Hotspots, first reception facilities are in place with a capacity for receiving approximately 1 500 persons¹ for the purpose of identification, registration and fingerprinting. Two more reception facilities will be ready in Augusta and Taranto² by the end of 2015.

The implementation of the Hotspot approach in Greece is being modelled on the work done so far in Italy. It will take into account the specific geographical challenges faced by Greece with arrivals taking place in multiple locations. A headquarter Hotspot in Piraeus will be established where asylum seekers will be received from different arrival points.

When will the Hotspots be operational?

On 15 July 2015, Commissioner Avramopoulos sent a roadmap to Member States for the implementation of the Hotspots for Italy and Greece, drafted jointly with the Member States and with Frontex, EASO, Europol and Eurojust.

The two Hotspot systems will be operational very soon. Operational planning is in the final stages for both Italy and Greece, and a number of resources are already on the ground.

¹ Pozzallo (300 places), Porto Empedocle (300 places), Trapani (400 places) and Lampedusa (500 places)

² Augusta (300 places) and Taranto (400 places)