



MANAGING THE REFUGEE CRISIS

EU-TURKEY JOINT ACTION PLAN: IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

A joint response

On 29 November 2015, at the EU-Turkey summit, the Joint Action Plan was activated. Its aim is to step up cooperation for the support of Syrian refugees under temporary protection and their host communities in Turkey and to strengthen cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU. The implementation of the Joint Action Plan should bring order into migratory flows and help to stem irregular migration.

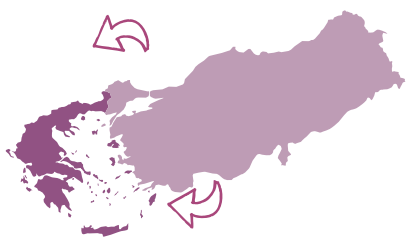
Turkey has taken a number of important actions in order to implement the Joint Action Plan; however, these efforts are not yet translating into a sufficient or sustainable reduction in the flows of irregular migrants entering the EU from Turkey. Turkey is urged to continue and further reinforce its steps towards full, speedy and effective implementation of the Joint Action Plan.

It is important that the impact of the coordinated EU-Turkey efforts is rapidly reflected in results, in particular stemming the influx of irregular migrants.

Irregular arrivals to the EU

876 777 people arrived from Turkey to Greece since the beginning of 2015. An additional 117.000 migrants have entered the EU from Turkey since the beginning of the year. The scale is immense and the Commission is working

very closely with the Turkish authorities to reduce the scale of irregular crossings of the Aegean Sea. To address this challenge the EU and Turkey are working closely together and implementing the Joint Action Plan.



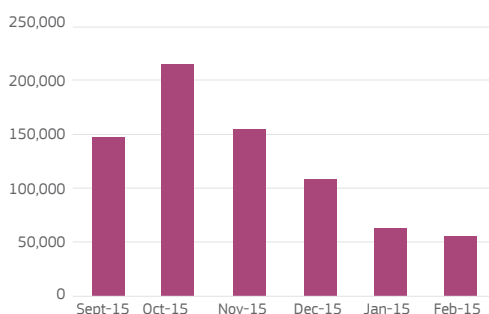
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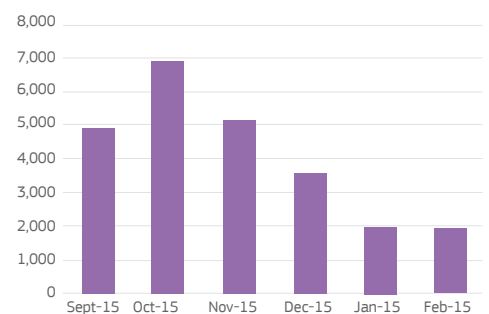
Reducing Migratory Flows: Arrivals from Turkey to Greece

The irregular arrivals from Turkey to Greece present a changing pattern: they have declined since October and stabilised during January and February at a daily average of about 1,960 arrivals. However, figures remain high for this period of the year.

PER MONTH



AVERAGE PER DAY



Commitments by Turkey

- Continue to ensure that migrants are registered and provided with appropriate documents on a compulsory basis;
- Continue efforts to facilitate access for Syrians under temporary protection to public services including education, health and employment;
- Ensure that vulnerable people continue to be identified and taken care of;
- Further strengthen the interception capacity of the Turkish Coast Guard;
- Step up cooperation with Bulgarian and Greek authorities to prevent irregular migration across the common land borders;
- Step up cooperation to smoothly readmit irregular migrants who are not in need of international protection and were intercepted coming from the Turkish territory;
- Pursue the progressive alignment of Turkish and EU visa policy, notably for countries representing an important source of illegal migration.

What has been done

- Ongoing and accelerated work on the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap, including the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, expected to enter into force for third country nationals as of 1 June 2016;
- Introduction of visa obligation for Syrians travelling to Turkey by air and sea from a third country, with the aim to reduce onward transit towards the EU;
- Revised visa policy towards Iraqis: as of 10 February they can no longer obtain visas at the border;
- As of 5 February, the e-visa procedure has been narrowed and is now open only for holders of valid Schengen, USA, UK or Ireland visas/residence permits;
- Draft legislation on personal data protection under discussion in the Parliament. If in line with European standards, such legislation will facilitate cooperation with Frontex, Europol, Eurojust and Member States' law enforcement agencies;
- Improvements in the implementation of the Turkey – Greece Readmission Protocol: on 1 and 2 March Turkey readmitted around 300 illegal migrants as a result of structural solutions identified; further returns are expected to take place soon;
- Efforts to prevent irregular departures, arrest smugglers and rescue migrants at sea: on 1 February 2016 Turkey established a special unit on migrant smuggling within the Turkish National Police and increased penalties for smugglers.

Commitments by the European Union

- Mobilise substantial and concrete new funds to support Turkey in coping with the challenge represented by the presence of Syrians under temporary protection;
- Continue to provide humanitarian assistance via relevant organisations in Turkey;
- Support existing Member State and EU resettlement schemes and programmes;
- Further support Turkey to strengthen its capacity to combat migrant smuggling;
- Support cooperation between EU Member States and Turkey in organising joint return operations towards countries of origin of irregular migrants;
- Enhance the EU capacity to exchange information with Turkey on combating smuggling networks;
- Increase the financial assistance offered to support Turkey in meeting the requirements of the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue.

What has been done

- Provision of immediate assistance via humanitarian organisations in Turkey;
- Establishment of the €3 billion Facility for Refugees in Turkey;
- First meeting of Facility for Refugees Steering Committee held on 17 February; priority actions agreed: humanitarian assistance to refugees in Turkey and education of Syrian children; €90 mln from the EU humanitarian budget already allocated by the European Commission and currently being contracted;
- Additional €55 mln transferred to the EU Trust Fund for the Syrian Crisis, in particular to allow additional 110,000 Syrian children living outside camps in Turkey to access formal education.
- €20 mln funding from the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace agreed to reinforce the Turkish Coast Guard;
- Preparation of a needs assessment to identify projects for Syrians refugees in Turkey and host communities – first overview expected by mid-March, with completion by end April;
- Work has been undertaken towards entry into force of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement as regards third country nationals as of 1 June 2016;
- Technical work continues on the voluntary humanitarian admission scheme.

Next steps

- As a matter of urgency, Turkey needs to make further significant progress in preventing irregular departures of migrants and refugees from its territory. In particular Turkey needs to strengthen efforts against migrant smuggling in coastal areas, including through land based operations; it is important that results are rapidly shown, especially in stemming the influx of irregular migrants to the EU.
- Intensify bilateral cooperation on readmission between Turkey and Greece, and prepare to fully implement the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement for third country nationals as of 1 June.
- On its side, the Commission will rapidly start deploying the funding from the €3 billion Facility for Refugees in Turkey to provide assistance to Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, based on a needs assessment under completion.
- Turkey and the EU need to continue to operationalise their work on the resolute and focused implementation of the Joint Action Plan. It is important that such joint efforts show rapidly results on the ground, in particular in stemming the influx of irregular migrants.