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Seventh report on relocation and resettlement

1 Introduction

The Seventh Report on Relocation and Resettlement provides an updated state of play since the last report of 28 September¹ and assesses the actions undertaken by all relevant stakeholders from 27 September 2016 until 8 November (the reporting period) to deliver on the commitments under the relocation and resettlement schemes.

In light of the continuous urgent need to provide support to both Greece and Italy, the European Council, at its last meeting on 20 and 21 October 2016,² reiterated its call to further intensify efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied minors, and existing resettlement schemes.

Since 26 September 2016, 4,561 people have arrived in Greece.³ The total number of migrants present in Greece increased compared to the previous reporting period and as of 8 November is around 61,700 migrants, with around 16,250 on the islands and around 45,450 persons on mainland Greece.⁴ In Italy, 29,844 people⁵ have arrived since 26 September, representing a higher trend than the same period in 2015 (13.5% increase compared to the same period in 2015). Arrivals of Eritreans, one of the nationalities eligible for relocation, also remained high (Eritrea is the second highest nationality among arrivals to Italy with more than 3,660 arrivals in the reporting period, representing 12% of arrivals). Based on information from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, more than 6,000 Eritreans are currently potential applicants for relocation in Italy.

During the reporting period, 1,212 additional persons have been relocated, bringing the total number of persons relocated so far to 6,925 (5,376 from Greece and 1,549 from Italy). Despite the overall positive trend on relocation, October represents a dip in relocation due to the specific circumstances during the reporting period, which should be of a temporary nature. However, for the positive trend to be strengthened, an acceleration of relocation efforts is needed in order to meet the obligations foreseen under the two Council decisions. Europe's migratory situation still remains fragile and requires continuous and sustained action from all sides. With the continuous arrival of migrants in Italy and the still challenging humanitarian situation in Greece, relocation remains crucial to alleviate the pressure in these countries.

As regards resettlement, implementation of the July 2015 Conclusions⁶ to resettle 22,504 people continues to be on track with 11,852 people resettled so far, which is more than half of the agreed number. Since the previous report 1,157 people have been resettled mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Part of the resettlement under this European scheme serves

¹ COM(2016) 636 final.

² European Council Conclusions of 20 October 2016 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/10/21-european-council-conclusions/>.

³ The number of detections of illegal border-crossings between border crossing points (BCPs) reported by Greece from Turkey through sea and land borders from 26 September 2016 until 6 November as recorded in JORA (Joint Operations Reporting Applications).

⁴ Source: Greek authorities. The numbers in mainland Greece should progressively decrease in line with relocation transfers.

⁵ Source: Italian Ministry of the Interior covering from 26 September until 6 November.

⁶ Conclusions of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on resettling through multilateral and national scheme 20,000 persons in clear need of international protection (11130/15).

also to implement the 1:1 mechanisms set out in the EU-Turkey Statement. Since the starting date of 4 April,⁷ 2,217 persons have been resettled from Turkey to the EU within that mechanism, including 603 since the previous report.

2 Relocation

2.1 Main highlights during the reporting period

After the record number of transfers in September, October has been a transition month with a relocation pace lower than in previous reporting periods. This dip reflects particular circumstances and is partially due to the low number of pledges in August. Since the relocation procedure takes about two months to be concluded, the low pledges in August have translated into a low transfer rate in October. Consequently, the significant increase in the number of pledges observed in September is expected to translate into actual transfers in November only. Other country-specific factors may also explain the momentarily slowing down of relocation: France's dismantling of the Calais camp in October appears to have had an impact in the overall relocation numbers in the reporting period, since France has been relocating every month about 450 people, but in October slowed down relocation.

November is expected to see again a rise of relocations, with around 1,800 transfers foreseen. However, the temporary downturn in this reporting period in an otherwise progressively positive trend confirms that more steady efforts are needed to increase the number of transfers per month and avoid having the kind of fluctuations in relocation observed in October. As the administrative and practical obstacles hampering relocation are gradually being lifted, achieving more regularity and a continuous rapidly ascending curve in relocation transfers will be the main challenges in the coming months.

In **Greece**, the Asylum Service has further increased its registration capacity for applicants from nationalities eligible for relocation, from 110 per day to 175 per day, through hiring of new staff. By the end of January 2017, 87% of the pre-registered applicants of nationalities eligible for relocation should be fully registered. Member States will need to make additional efforts to open and fill relocation places to keep up with the pace of the Greek Asylum Service to process relocation requests. In particular, Member States will need to improve their planning, pledge more and more regularly and increase their processing and reception capacity, both in order to accelerate the response time and to accommodate an increased number of applicants. In fact, in October, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had to postpone some transfers as it seemed that some Member States did not have the capacity to swiftly accommodate the relocation applicants in the pipeline.

In **Italy**, as previously reported, the meeting of the National Contact Points on relocation in Rome on 15 September served to find a solution to the bottleneck related to additional security checks. The Italian Ministry of the Interior and Europol, with the support of the Commission, have now formalised the arrangements for Europol's facilitating role in the relocation procedure. Specifically, a workflow for additional, exceptional security checks that Member States can request in the framework of relocation was developed and this will be incorporated into the relocation protocol which is being developed for Italy. This positive development already paved the way for new and higher pledges from Member States. In this

⁷ SN 38/16, 18.03.2016.

context, it is now expected that Italy will significantly increase the number of relocation transfers in the coming weeks.

During the reporting period the Commission also focused its efforts on **unaccompanied minors** to better understand the obstacles for their relocation and find solutions. To that end the Commission dedicated a specific session of the 7th Forum on Resettlement and Relocation in October 2016 to unaccompanied minors.⁸

The number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy continued to increase (22,775 arrivals since the beginning of January up to 4 November 2016 including 3,569 Eritreans, 167 Syrians and 187 Iraqis and 12 Yemenis).⁹ In Greece, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) reports that as of 2 November, 2,400 unaccompanied minors were estimated to be present in Greece. As already reported, the mass pre-registration exercise in Greece identified 1,225 unaccompanied minors,¹⁰ of which 48% (about 588) belong to one of the nationalities eligible for relocation (36% Syrians and 12% Iraqis).¹¹ While the majority of the unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation in Italy are travelling by themselves (no relatives travelling with them), the majority of unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation in Greece are "separated children" (minors travelling with relatives, such as grandparents, siblings or uncles/aunts, or married to adults). In this sense, out of the 480 unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation that have been fully registered in Greece, 274 are "separated children" and only 122 are minors completely on their own in Greece, which is the category with more difficulties for relocation. Furthermore, 320 of the 480 unaccompanied minors are 16 or 17 years old.

In this context, with 43 (22 unaccompanied minors travelling by themselves and 21 "separated children") relocated during the reporting period, the number of unaccompanied minors relocated overall is 148 when all categories of "separated children" are included in the statistics.¹² It is expected that the relocation of unaccompanied minors will increase in the near future and to relocate all unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation in the coming months, at least from Greece. There are positive signs in this respect. In the last weeks there was been an acceleration in the relocation of unaccompanied minors with Finland relocating

⁸ Article 2(1) of the Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU) defines "unaccompanied minor" as a minor (under 18 years old) who arrives on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied "by an adult responsible for him or her whether by law or by the practice of the Member State concerned" [emphasis added]. As a consequence of the differences in law and practice among Member States, the definition of unaccompanied minors varies from Member State to Member State which makes that separated children, including minors married to adults, be considered unaccompanied in some Member States while not in others. These also creates inconsistencies in the reporting of total number of unaccompanied minors relocated since some Member States only consider as such those on their own and exclude from the reporting separated children relocated.

⁹ Only nationalities potentially eligible for relocation mentioned.

¹⁰ http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Preregistration-data_template_5_EN_EXTERNAL.pdf.

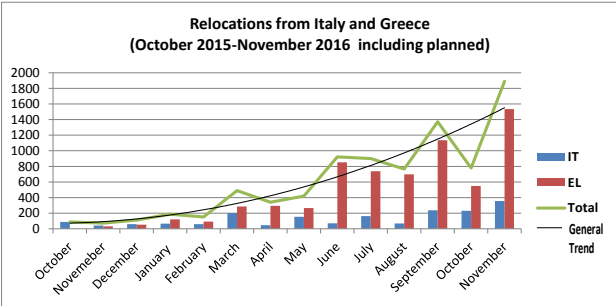
¹¹ The biggest group of unaccompanied minors in Greece are Afghanis, who are not eligible for relocation. However, the Greek government is in contact with several Member States to negotiate a possible voluntary transfer of these minors with a different status, other than as applicants for international protection.

¹² In the previous report the total number of unaccompanied minors relocated was 75. The total in this reporting period should therefore be 118 unaccompanied minors relocated. However, the number included minors travelling on their own and only certain categories of "separated children". The numbers have been revised to reflect more accurately the total number of unaccompanied minors relocated including minors travelling on their own and all categories of "separated children".

31 unaccompanied minors (15 minors travelling on their own and 16 "separated children") in a single transfer. Member States have fewer problems to relocate "separated children" and are already doing so even if not always counted as unaccompanied minors in official statistics. In addition, with regard to unaccompanied minors travelling on their own, several Member States (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain) have made offers for the relocation of unaccompanied minors travelling by themselves, totalling around 160 places for the coming months,¹³ which is sufficient to cover the needs for Greece. However, more offers would be needed to cover Italy. In addition, Italy will still need to develop a specific procedure to make the relocation of unaccompanied minors travelling on their own possible, and Member States will need to offer more specific pledges for them.

The Commission will continue closely working with the Greek Asylum Service, the Italian authorities, Member States Liaison Officers, the United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees (UNHCR), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and IOM to develop practical arrangements that will facilitate and speed up the relocation of unaccompanied minors.

2.2 Actions by the Member States of relocation



From 28 September until 8 November, 1,212 additional persons were relocated, 921 from Greece¹⁴ and 291 from Italy.¹⁵ Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania continued with regular weekly and monthly transfers and Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta have consolidated the trend of monthly transfers. France is the country that has

relocated the largest number of applicants (2,155), followed by the Netherlands (915) and Finland (862). It is to be noted that Member States with smaller allocations (such as Finland, the Baltic States, Malta or Portugal), together with France, the Netherlands and Romania, have been showing more regularity and impetus and are more on track to meet their obligations. The first relocations from Greece to Switzerland and from Italy to Norway took place in the reporting periods. At least 542 additional relocation transfers are planned until the end of November from Greece¹⁶ and 397 from Italy.¹⁷ The relocations planned in November indicate that the downturn in October should be exceptional – a dip rather than a real drop.

¹³ These numbers should be understood as a minimum. The Commission is still expecting additional replies to its call for pledges for unaccompanied minors travelling on their own. Furthermore, some Member States' pledges are open offers and do not have attached a specific maximum number of unaccompanied minors travelling by themselves that can be relocated.

¹⁴ 24 to Belgium, 23 to Bulgaria, 17 to Estonia, 110 to Finland, 203 to France, 1 to Germany, 40 to Ireland, 72 to Latvia, 61 to Lithuania, 81 to the Netherlands, 73 to Portugal, 153 to Romania, 35 to Spain and 28 to Switzerland. To be noted that 2 people reported in the previous report as relocated to Romania were Dublin transfers.

¹⁵ 5 to Croatia, 20 to Luxembourg, 20 to Malta, 108 to the Netherlands, 20 to Norway, 78 to Portugal, 31 to Romania and 9 to Slovenia. 62 people relocated to Finland on 27 September were not counted in the previous report.

¹⁶ 170 to France, 38 to Lithuania, 103 to The Netherlands, 20 to Norway, 15 to Portugal, 149 to Romania, 6 to Slovakia, 41 to Slovenia. In addition, additional transfers to Portugal, Luxembourg, Malta and Germany are expected also in November but final date or total people to be transferred not confirmed..

¹⁷ 226 to Germany, 39 to Finland, 50 to France, 21 to Switzerland and 61 to Norway.

Actions to address the limited number of pledges: during the reporting period, Germany continued with its monthly indication of readiness to relocate swiftly applicants for international protection (the "formal pledges") of 500 people for Italy and 500 people for Greece. Spain made a pledge of 400 people for Greece and 100 for Italy. Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Romania, Switzerland and Norway are pledging on a monthly basis while Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia every two months. While some Member States continue focusing their pledges only on Greece, the arrangements involving Europol as facilitator in Italy are expected to encourage additional Member States to actively engage in relocation from Italy.

However, overall only nine Member States (Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands and Spain)¹⁸ and Switzerland and Norway¹⁹ submitted 2,634 formal pledges during the reporting period (1,105 formal pledges submitted for Italy and 1,529 for Greece) which is insufficient to meet current needs (see below section 2.3). The total number of formal pledges by Member States of relocation amounts to 16,259 (4,954 to Italy²⁰ and 11,305 to Greece). Faster progress and more steadiness is needed to ensure that all Member States pledge a sufficient number of places and more regularly; halfway through the implementing period, the Commission would expect that at least half of the Member States' allocations should have been pledged.

Austria²¹ and Hungary continue being the only two countries that have not submitted any pledge nor relocated at all. Since April, Poland has not taken forward the implementation of its pledges and has not pledged nor relocated any applicant.²² In this reporting period, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have not made any pledge nor have they relocated any applicant.

Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests: Most Member States and Associated States participating in the relocation scheme are increasing their efforts to accelerate the response time to relocation requests and meet the 10 working days target set in the relocation protocols. However, more efforts are needed to increase and ensure a constant monthly flow. In general, most States provide positive replies to the relocation requests. However, there are still instances where the acceptance rate could be significantly increased and where the reasoning of rejections should be improved to meet the requirements of the Council Decisions. Good practices in respect of adequately motivating the refusals of the relocation requests, such as those applied by the Netherlands, were shared during the 7th Forum on Resettlement and Relocation. To address the concerns raised by several Member

¹⁸ Cyprus 30 for Greece and 30 for Italy, Estonia 21 for Greece, Finland 150 for Greece and 150 for Italy, Germany 500 for Greece and 500 for Italy, Ireland 80 for Greece, Latvia 60 for Greece, Malta 28 for Greece, the Netherlands 100 for Greece and 100 for Italy, Spain 400 for Greece and 100 for Italy.

¹⁹ Switzerland 100 for Greece and Norway 60 for Greece and 225 for Italy.

²⁰ A pledge from Romania from 9 September had not been included in the previous report.

²¹ In accordance with Council Decision 2016/408 of 10 March 2016, Austria benefits from a temporary suspension of the relocation of up to 30% of applicants allocated to Austria under Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601. As a consequence, the relocation to Austria of 1 065 applicants shall be suspended until 11 March 2017. However, the obligations under Decision 2015/1601 continue to apply to Austria in respect of the relocation of the remaining allocation, so pledges and relocations are still required.

²² In early April, Poland suspended the processing of 73 relocation requests that the Greek Asylum Service sent to Poland on the basis of a pledge that Poland submitted on 16 December 2015 thus *de facto* freezing the relocation procedure three and a half months after the submission of the pledge. The same applies to requests from Italy.

States regarding sharing security-related information, Europol offered a dedicated secure communication channel for Member States to safely provide reasons for rejections of relocation requests. During the 7th Forum on Resettlement and Relocation the Commission stressed once more the possibility of exchanging fingerprints via police cooperation channels for security verification at national level, particularly in cases where applicants lacked ID or travel documents.

Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants, including unaccompanied minors: The pace of relocation of unaccompanied minors has accelerated in the last week of the reporting period. Since 28 September, 43 unaccompanied minors (22 unaccompanied minors travelling by themselves and 21 "separated children") have been relocated from Greece (to Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Finland and Switzerland) bringing the total number of unaccompanied minors relocated to 118. However, taking into account all categories of separated children, the total number is 148. Following the 7th Forum on Resettlement and Relocation it was clarified that Member States have in general no issues to relocate "separated children" (see above). As to unaccompanied minors travelling on their own, following the Commission's call, Member States have offered a total of 160 places.

Actions to reinforce EASO's capacity to support Italy and Greece: The October European Council once again underlined the urgent need to step up Member States' support in providing experts to EASO. Although positive developments have been noted with regards to improved long term planning of expert deployments and the replacement of outgoing experts with new nominations, more and longer-term nominations with the right profile are urgently needed to ensure adequate presence of EASO on the ground and the processing capacity of the teams both in Italy and Greece. Short deployments are very disruptive for the overall relocation workflow both in Italy and Greece. As deployments come to an end, a drop in the pace of registrations occurs until replacements arrive. Short deployments and inadequate profiles also affect the quality of the relocation files as experts need time to become familiar with the procedures in place. Reminders of the calls were issued by the EASO Executive Director as well as by Commissioner Avramopoulos in his recent letters to the Member States and the current needs are continuously reiterated by the Commission in various fora to induce more deployments of experts, in coordination with EASO and the Presidency of the Council.

In Greece, EASO requires the permanent deployment of 28 experts in line with its fifth call for experts²³ to support the relocation scheme.²⁴ EASO is in constant contact with the Member States' National Contact Points to find new experts to replace deployments which come to an end. Some Member States have spontaneously taken up the commitment to cover certain posts over the longer term and to look automatically for a replacement when the deployment of one of their experts comes to an end, which the Commission and EASO very much welcome.

Now that the Greek Asylum Service is hiring new registration staff, more support to the Greek Asylum Service is needed to safeguard the quality and efficiency of the process. For this purpose EASO is already deploying more specialised experts in the field of exclusion,

²³ EASO's fifth call for experts to support relocation in Greece was launched on 21 April and was first reported in the 3rd Report on Relocation and Resettlement. The term of deployment of several experts ended during the reporting period.

²⁴ This need is distinct from the separate requirement for Member States to support EASO work in the islands to implement the EU-Turkey Statement (which is part of EASO's 7th call).

Dublin and senior registration officers who act as escalation desk in Athens, together with experts in fraudulent documents detection. The changed needs for the number and profiles of experts will be reflected in an upcoming call. The total number of experts deployed in Greece as of 7 November is 18 asylum experts and 27 interpreters, which remains insufficient to cope with the increased number of cases now that the mass pre-registration exercise is completed.

In Italy, EASO’s most recent call for experts, published on 28 May 2016, called for 35 additional experts to bring the number of asylum experts to a total of 74 as envisaged in the contingency plan agreed with the Italian authorities. By 7 November 2016, 100 offers²⁵ have been received. Out of this number of experts made available by Member States and Associated Countries, higher compared to previous reporting periods, 47 asylum experts and 36 cultural mediators were selected and deployed in Italy as of 7 November 2016 . Despite this recent positive rise in the number of deployed experts, it is still insufficient to cope with the still high number of arrivals of persons eligible for relocation and the significant volume of persons awaiting registration in Italy, and falls short of the number of experts needed under the contingency planning.

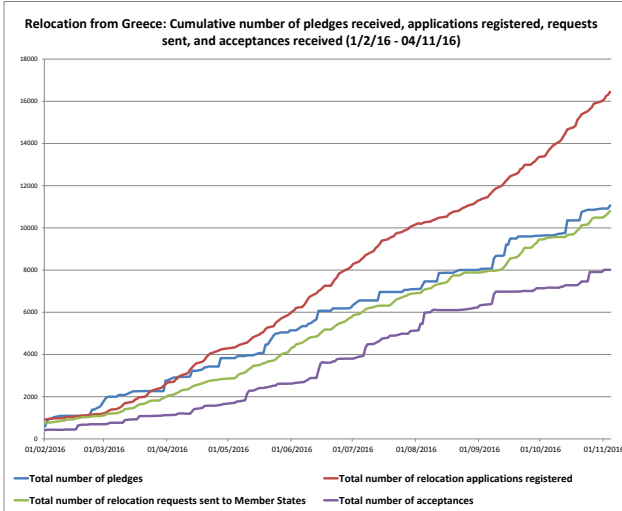
2.3 Actions by Greece and Italy, including highlights from the roadmaps

- *Greece*

Actions to accelerate the registration and processing of migrants and the registration capacity of the Greek Asylum Service: following the mass pre-registration exercise, the Greek Asylum Service has scheduled the appointments for full lodging asylum applications. By the end of January 2017, 87% of the pre-registered applicants will have been fully registered and the total caseload will be registered by April 2017. By 7 November 16,642 people had been fully registered. People that missed the pre-registration system exercise can still access the asylum procedure by making an appointment via the Skype system.

The Greek Asylum Service has further increased its registration capacity for applicants from nationalities eligible for relocation from 110 per day to 175 per day through the hiring of new staff.

In total the Relocation Unit in Athens currently employs 75 persons. The Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli regional offices also deal with relocation cases. EASO’s support teams to the registration process consist of 4 experts in Athens, 6 experts in Thessaloniki and 3 experts in Alexandroupoli by 7 November. As the Greek Asylum Service requires senior staff and specialised profiles (in order to transfer expertise to the new recruits), EASO will provide more diversified support.



The gap between the number of relocation requests submitted by Greece and the

²⁵ Austria, Switzerland, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Romania, Germany, Latvia, Spain, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Malta, Belgium, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

acceptances by Member States has increased during the reporting period (between 28 October and 4 November Greece submitted about 1,570 requests while only 940 replies were received). More significant is the increase in the gap between the number of registrations by the Greek Asylum Service and the total number of pledges (during the same period Greece registered 3,298 relocation requests, while the number of additional pledges in the same period was 1,499. In total by 7 November Greece had registered 16,642 applications while the total number of pledges was 11,275). These gaps are partially responsible for the slow-down of relocation in October and, as foreseen by the Commission in previous reports, are turning into a serious bottleneck in the follow-up to the mass pre-registration exercise. As a consequence, ensuring more and steadier pledges and accelerating relocation (particularly the response time) becomes a priority to avoid an unsustainable accumulation of cases.

Actions to improve the reception capacity in Greece: As of 8 November, the total reception capacity in Greece stands at over 68,863 places²⁶ in temporary facilities and permanent reception places at the mainland, both for irregular migrants and persons in possible need of international protection who have expressed their will to apply for asylum or have already lodged their asylum applications. According to the information given by the Greek authorities, the total planned capacity of the 40 permanent sites in the mainland is estimated to be around 33,186 places.

Out of the 20,000 places committed for applicants eligible for relocation under the rental scheme by the UNHCR,²⁷ as of 7 November, 17,664 places were available, including 5,509 places in hotels/entire buildings, 10,076 places in apartments, 497 places in host families, and 622 places in dedicated facilities for unaccompanied minors. UNHCR expects to have the full 20,000 ready by the end of the year. In addition, as regards the relocation centres, as of 8 November, only one of the three relocation centres committed by the Greek authorities (Lagadikia) has been established with 960 places available. For the remaining two, the Greek authorities have not yet designated suitable sites. Discussions are still ongoing between the UNHCR and the Greek authorities regarding the provision of more sites for the construction of dedicated relocation centres, notably in the Attica region.

The three relocation centres should reach a capacity for 6,000 people. As mentioned in previous Reports, the Commission urges Greece to designate these sites as soon as possible to avoid bottlenecks in the implementation of the last stages of the relocation workflow following the mass pre-registration exercise.

²⁶ This figure includes the places provided under the UNHCR rental scheme capacity and the reception places at the hotspots. http://www.media.gov.gr/images/prosfygiko/REFUGEE_FLOWS-27-10-2016.pdf

[http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country\[\]=83](http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country[]=83)

These temporary emergency and permanent facilities are established on the Aegean islands in the hotspots as well as on the mainland. As of 8 November 2016, and based on the information available to the Commission, there are currently only 1,140 permanent accommodation places that exclusively host applicants for international protection and unaccompanied minors.

²⁷ The Delegation Agreement reached with UNHCR for the 20,000 places rental scheme in January 2016 primarily benefits asylum seekers eligible for relocation. The Delegation Agreement was revised in July 2016 in order to make it clearer in the text that the accommodation scheme includes also the possibility to establish places in relocation sites managed by UNHCR, and that the target group of the accommodation scheme includes not only relocation candidates but also other asylum seekers. UNHCR agreed to make 6,000 places from the rental scheme available to relocation centres to accommodate all fully registered relocation applicants.

- *Italy*

Actions to increase the number of and make the hotspots fully operational: Repeated spikes in the number of arrivals over the last months have demonstrated that the current capacity of 1,600 places in the four operational hotspots (Pozzallo, Lampedusa, Trapani and Taranto) is not sufficient. In addition, the majority of disembarkations (around 70%) continue to take place outside the hotspots. While first preparatory steps have already been undertaken (such as improvement of facilities and provision of equipment), Italy should accelerate the opening of already announced additional hotspots. Against this background, Italian authorities have indicated that hotspot standards are applied to six additional ports of disembarkation. It is the Commission point of view that these could become fully-fledged hotspots after some works, notably to ensure adequate reception structures. Thanks to this positive step, the vast majority of migrants arriving in Italy are disembarked according to hotspot standards. Moreover, Italian authorities expressed their intention to apply the hotspot Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)²⁸ to all Italian disembarkation shortly. A circular is being drafted to this end to instruct all Prefectures and *Questure* on the ground accordingly. As mentioned in the previous report, given the increasing rate of unaccompanied minors disembarking in Italy, dedicated areas as well as particular assistance should be provided in all hotspots and transfer to first or second line reception facilities completed in the shortest possible timeframe, and migrants should be processed as quickly as possible and within a maximum 72 hours.

Actions to improve coordination: The last meeting of the group monitoring the implementation of the SOPs was held on 19 October 2016. Revised technical tender specifications and, based thereupon, new and renewed contracts between Prefectures and hotspot managing entities will need to be in line with hotspot SOPs. The continued lack of an Italian coordinator for each hotspot remains a weakness in the operation of the hotspots. On relocation, the draft relocation protocol is being adapted on the basis of the conclusions of the ad-hoc meeting of the National Contact Points for relocation on 15 September and the arrangements agreed between the Italian authorities and Europol and will be discussed during the next Liaison Officers meeting foreseen in November.

Actions to improve processing capacities in Italy: As previously reported, and in line with the recent increase of pledges made available by Member States, the capacity of the Italian authorities to register and process applications will need to increase in order to accelerate the registration of persons belonging to the nationalities eligible for relocation and fill the new pledges. This should also contribute to reducing the risks of absconding, as applicants' requests will be processed more speedily. In this framework, the teams registering applications need to be strengthened and EASO presence in the new registration Hubs needs to be ensured. The activities of EASO roving teams for registration contribute to swift registration of applicants accommodated outside of registration Hubs thereby increasing the number of applicants for relocation.

Actions to speed up the response time to relocation requests: following the agreement reached at the ad-hoc meeting of the National Contact Points for relocation, the Italian Ministry of the Interior and Europol, with the support of the Commission, formalised the practical procedure to be followed through an exchange of letters on 4 November 2016. In particular, a workflow for additional, exceptional security checks that Member States can

²⁸ http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/hotspots_sops_-_english_version.pdf.

request in the framework of relocation was developed with the Commission's support and will be incorporated into the relocation protocol that is currently being elaborated. This positive momentum already paved the way for new and higher pledges from Member States, which should soon also lead to increased relocation transfers from Italy.

Actions to address challenges related to the relocation of vulnerable applicants and unaccompanied minors: No unaccompanied minor has been relocated yet from Italy. Implementing the procedure is a key priority as about 4,000 unaccompanied minors potentially eligible for relocation (most from Eritrea) have disembarked in Italy since the beginning of 2016. After calls from the European Commission, several Member States (Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands) have made available places for unaccompanied minors, including both travelling on their own and separated children. The Commission encourages Italy to take all necessary steps to render possible the relocation of unaccompanied minors when such an action is found to be in their best interest, and to take into consideration the possibility to set up as soon as possible one or more relocation Hubs for unaccompanied minors. Implementing the relocation procedure would also contribute to responding to the high absconding rate of unaccompanied minors potentially eligible for relocation. According to data published by Ministry of Labour, Eritreans are the second nationality of unaccompanied minors reported to have absconded from reception facilities.²⁹

Actions to limit secondary movements: As part of actions taken by the Italian authorities to limit secondary movements, the Italian police continue regularly transferring migrants who moved irregularly from the South to the North of the country, back to the reception facilities in the South of the country. EASO has intensified the activities of the roving team that performs registration for relocation in various areas where candidates for relocation are accommodated (based on needs indicated by the Italian authorities) outside of registration Hubs. The presence and movements of irregular migrants on Italian territory should be closely monitored, and irregular secondary movements prevented.

2.4 Actions by the Commission and EU agencies

- *European Commission*

The Commission has continued supporting Italy and Greece on the ground on a day to day basis, helping with the coordination among various stakeholders and assisting the Greek and Italian authorities to identify bottlenecks, find solutions to challenges in close cooperation with all stakeholders and develop specific procedures. As part of this support, the Commission facilitated the conclusion of the arrangements between Italy and Europol described above for additional security checks, one of the main bottlenecks slowing down relocations from Italy and it is expected that more Member States will now actively engage with Italy.

The 7th Forum on Relocation and Resettlement gathered the National Contact Points for relocation of all Member States and Associated Countries and relevant stakeholders (EASO, UNHCR, IOM, Europol) to discuss the progress made in the implementation of the relocation scheme one year after the entry into force of the Council Decisions on relocation. It had a special emphasis on unaccompanied minors (UAM) and security issues. The meeting aimed at identifying remaining obstacles in the relocation procedure, finding common solutions and

²⁹ http://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Documents/Report%20MSNA%2030_09_2016.pdf (last page).

sharing best practices. The main conclusions of the meeting have already been highlighted throughout this Report. These conclusions will be closely followed-up in Greece and Italy at the regular Liaison Officers meetings organised by the Commission. The next of such meetings will take place in the second half of November.

As part of its monitoring of the implementation of the Council Decisions on relocation, the Commission raised and will continue to raise concerns with those Member States that are falling behind in implementing the Council Decisions. Commissioner Avramopoulos recently sent letters to Member States reminding them of their obligations under the Council Decisions on Relocation.

- ***European Asylum Support Office***

Actions to speed up the relocation process and increase the registration capacity in Greece and Italy: Experts are deployed in a number of functions.

In **Greece**, 9 experts currently support the registration process directly through joint processing, with 9 other experts involved in information and advice functions. Based on the recommendations on how to enhance the matching process, aimed at matching applicants to specific Member States, EASO will test the matching tool in December 2016-January 2017.

Following the pre-registration exercise the Greek Asylum Service is reinforcing its registration capacity. EASO has diversified its support to the relocation procedure and included more experts on exclusion indicators, Dublin Regulation, family unit and document fraud as well as senior registration officers. These experts function as an escalation desk for difficult cases which will help decongest the regular registration process and safeguard the quality of the relocation files. Reinforced support throughout the various steps of the relocation procedure, from information provision, to registration and the matching process remains needed. EASO will further increase its number of registration experts in Thessaloniki and is currently procuring mobile units to provide working space for these experts. EASO also foresees the need of additional experts for information provision in the camps.

In **Italy**, EASO is currently deploying 47 out of the 74 requested experts from Member States and associated countries: 10 experts in the hotspots, 7 experts in two mobile teams (based in Rome and Catania), 10 experts in registration Hubs, 5 experts in the registration roving team, 1 expert providing support in press communication activities and 14 experts in the Dublin Unit in Rome. EASO is also deploying up to 48 cultural mediators (for Arabic, Tigrinya and Kurdish) to support the relocation process (as of 7 November, 36 cultural mediators are deployed on the ground). In the reporting period EASO has intensified the activities of the roving team that performs registration for relocation in various locations where candidates for relocation are accommodated (based on needs indicated by the Italian authorities) outside of registration Hubs.³⁰ The roving team also supports the local *Questura* by building the capacity of Police officers in performing registrations themselves.

EASO is also working to ensure appropriate and efficient working conditions in the hotspots for the EASO teams. 5 Mobile offices (containers) in some of the hotspots and Hubs were installed (1 in Trapani hotspot, 2 in Villa Sikanian and Bari Hubs, respectively) and another 1

³⁰ To-date, the team has covered the following locations Cagliari (Sardinia), Foggia, Bologna, Torino, Milan, Verona, Venice, Vicenza, Teramo, Chieti, Florence, Pisa, Grosseto and Modena.

to be placed in the Augusta harbour where numerous disembarkations happen. Technical equipment (computers) was also made available to the Italian authorities to support relocation-related work (5 working stations were made available in each registration Hub and in the *Questura* in Rome, further 20 to be placed in the Dublin Unit once internal security clearance is obtained to link them to the existing system).

The European Council Conclusions of 20 October 2016 called on EASO to ensure that the Asylum Intervention Pool (AIP) becomes operational as soon as possible. EASO has therefore sought support of its Management Board to swiftly update its AIP through nomination of national experts with certain profiles by 27 October 2016. In addition and in order to facilitate greater response to calls for experts, EASO is developing a pilot induction training programme for case officers with limited experience and also proposed amendments to the relevant rules on experts' fees, to enable the agency to pay a fee to experts deployed through national services, which are not permanent staff of those services.

3 Resettlement

Based on the information received from the participating States, by 7 November 2016 11,852 people have been resettled in the framework of the resettlement scheme of 20 July 2015 to 21 resettling States (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). **Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Finland** as well as associated states **Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Iceland** have already fulfilled their pledges.

A majority of States participating in the scheme indicated that their resettlement efforts were primarily, but not exclusively, directed at Syrians staying in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. This includes efforts from Member States to resettle Syrians from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March.

The number of resettlements from Turkey continues to increase as Member States continue their assessment of files referred to them by Turkey via UNHCR. Member States are also preparing further missions to Turkey to interview resettlement candidates. The drop-out rate of candidates included on the referral list provided by the Turkish Directorate General Migration Management to the UNHCR in early September has been lower as compared to previous lists, which points to an overall improvement in the selection processes. The Turkish authorities are working on the next lists of referrals which are likely to be shorter, and delivered on a more regular basis to ensure a smooth planning of operations.

Since 4 April 2016, 2,217 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under the resettlement part of the 1:1 scheme. In addition, 346 persons have been approved and are now waiting to be resettled. Altogether, 472 resettlements are expected to be carried out in November and the remaining number of all pledges is 11,228.

The pace of resettlement has been maintained with 603 Syrians resettled between 26 September and 7 November. In addition to Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden resettlement has also taken place to Norway.

Council Decision (EU) 2016/1754³¹ was adopted on 28 September to allow Member States to fulfil their obligations under Decision (EU) 2015/1601 by using the unallocated 54,000 places to either relocate applicants for international protection from Italy and Greece or admit to their territory Syrian nationals in clear need of international protection present in Turkey through resettlement or other forms of legal admission. As an immediate follow up, the Commission has already asked Member States to communicate by 7 November the number of Syrians present in Turkey to whom the Member States plan to grant legal admission under this Decision.

The Commission's proposal for a regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework³² adopted on 13 July 2016 is currently being examined by the co-legislators.

4 Way forward

The Heads of State or Government have repeatedly recognised the urgent need to address Europe's migratory situation and have called for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation scheme, as an essential expression of solidarity towards frontline Member States. In October, the European Council reiterated once more the need for Member States to further intensify efforts to accelerate relocation.

The Commission has been constantly working with the Italian and Greek authorities, Member States and UNHCR, IOM, EASO, Frontex and Europol to support and improve the relocation procedure on the ground. Greece has increased its processing capacity by 60% in the last reporting period and it will continue doing so in the coming month. Italy is increasing its processing capacity and has shown flexibility to the demands of the Member States of relocation regarding security issues. The arrangements with Europol are now in place. UNHCR, IOM, EASO, Frontex and Europol are all increasing their support to Italy and Greece to accelerate and make more efficient the relocation procedure. Some Member States have shown to be truly committed to relocation and significantly contributed to the positive trends observed in the last months in terms of pledges and relocations actually performed.

However, the results achieved do not yet measure up to the commitments and obligations foreseen in the Council Decisions and the scale of the challenges faced. Our efforts must not slow down. Thousands of applicants in Italy and Greece are waiting to be relocated. When the relocation schemes slow down, it means longer waiting times in reception centres for applicants and increased uncertainty about their future, affecting the capacity of Italy and Greece to cope effectively with the crisis. Italy continues to receive a high number of migrants while Greece still faces a challenging humanitarian situation. Relocation remains therefore crucial to alleviate the pressure in these countries. Higher transfers per month and more regularity are essential to allow for effective planning and the even flow needed to avoid logistical problems on the ground.

The calls made by the Heads of State or Government must be matched with determined action now by the competent national services. Member States of relocation should build further on what has been done so far by responding fully to these calls and further intensify their efforts

³¹ OJ L 268, 1.10.2016, p. 82–84.

³² COM(2016) 468 final.

urgently to support Greece and Italy, thereby delivering on their legal obligations and applying solidarity in practice.

In its First Report on Relocation and Resettlement³³ the Commission assessed that at least 6,000 relocations should be completed per month if the targets set in the Council Decisions were to be achieved. As the Council Decisions on relocation enter their second year of implementation, meeting legal obligations under the Council Decisions will require a

To ensure the effective implementation of the two Council Decisions on relocation, the Commission calls on Member States:

- to pledge and relocate regularly and in accordance with the size of their allocation;
- to accelerate the response time to relocation requests to meet the 10 working days target set in the relocation protocols and share information regarding reasons for rejections via the secured channel offered by Europol;
- to increase their reception capacities to accommodate the relocation applicants, including unaccompanied minors, in accordance with their allocation;
- to nominate experts to respond to EASO's various calls, ensuring longer deployments and more senior and specialised profiles;
- for those Member States that have not made any pledge or have not relocated anyone, to do so without delay.

For their part, Greece and Italy should continue increasing their processing capacity. Greece should also establish urgently the remaining relocation centres and Italy implement the arrangements agreed with Europol and the first relocations of unaccompanied minors.

substantial increase in the number and regularity of pledges and acceleration in relocation in the coming months.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor and report regularly on the implementation of the two Council Decisions on relocation and will present its Eighth Report in December 2016. The Commission reserves the right to take action against those Member States not complying with their obligations.

In parallel, Member States should continue delivering on their resettlement commitments, including as part of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement.³⁴

³³ COM(2016) 165 final.

³⁴ Third Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, COM(2016) 634 final.