

MANAGING THE REFUGEE CRISIS

GREECE: PROGRESS REPORT

Effectively managing the pressure of migratory flows on the shared external Schengen border requires both responsibility and solidarity by all Member States. When it comes to common external borders which are under particular pressure, it is of crucial importance that two key measures are fully implemented: the 'hotspot' approach and the relocation scheme – with the fingerprinting of all migrants, the prompt selection and relocation of asylum applicants and establishment of adequate reception capacities. The other essential component is action to secure swift return, voluntary or forced, of people not in need of international protection and who do not therefore qualify for relocation.

With the support of the European Commission, the delivery of fully operational hotspots in all identified locations is improving steadily, but Greece must take the necessary actions as soon as possible to complete what remains to be done. The Commission will continue to support the efforts of the Greek authorities and measure the progress made and continue to call for the intensification of efforts in this regard.

880,000 people have arrived in Greece since the beginning of 2015. The scale is immense and the Commission is working very closely with the Greek authorities to assist them in this challenge.



A dedicated Commission team working under the leadership of the Commission's Director-General of the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) has been on the ground for months, working hand in hand with the Greek authorities, including to accelerate access to emergency funding, improve the coordination between the various actors, address administrative bottlenecks and facilitate knowledge sharing on border management and relocation. The Commission contributed to the launch of the UNHCR rental scheme on 14 December, to provide 20,000 reception places for asylum seekers in Greece. The Commission is providing €80 million from the 2016 EU budget.

HOTSPOTS

Commission Recommendations of 15 December

- Complete construction of the 4 remaining hotspots
- Establish a structured legal and procedural system for disembarkation and transfers
- Member States to make available necessary experts to ensure full roll-out of the hotspots as soon as construction works are concluded; Greece to ensure deployment of sufficient number of team leaders and sufficient security personnel in the hotspot areas
- Update IT systems and deploy an additional fingerprinting machines
- Systematically fingerprint migrants and enter data in central Eurodac system
- Finalise work to enable proper access to security databases from hotspots
- Greek authorities to increase police presence in the hotspots to improve security
- Improve coordination in hotspots

Progress since December Recommendation

- Works in hotspots in Lesbos, Leros, Chios and Samos in progress
- Work on the hotspot in Kos has started
- Legal provisions and standard operating procedures in place for hotspot management
- Coastal Patrol Teams deployed by Frontex in Lesbos, Chios and Samos.
- Increased Frontex and EASO presence (461 and 13 officers); further resources to be deployed when new Hotspots open
- Fingerprinting rate risen from 8% in September 2015 to 78% in January 2016.
- In January, 6 fingerprinting machines procured by the Hellenic Police and deployed in Lesbos; 25 fingerprinting machines procured by EASO to be deployed imminently in Hotspots; 65 more machines due to be delivered by end-February
- Security checks being made using the Schengen Information System (SIS), Interpol and Europol databases.
- Police presence still to be increased in Hotspots
- Temporary Hotspot coordinators from the Hellenic Army appointed for every island



RECEPTION CAPACITY

Commission Recommendations of 15 December

- Complete the construction of all 7,000 places for all five hotspot islands
- Member States to make available necessary experts to ensure full roll-out of the hotspots
- Continue to increase reception capacity in line with the Western Balkans Leaders' meeting commitments
- Member States to complete contributions via the Civil Protection Mechanism
- Improve reception for vulnerable people, especially unaccompanied children

What has been done

- 10,447 reception places on the Greek mainland, and 7,181 places in the Eastern Aegean islands; additional 12,342 places required to reach the target of 30,000 places
- UNHCR rent subsidy scheme launched for 14,950 reception places on the Greek mainland with €80 million in EU funding; work ongoing to reach target of 20,000 places
- UNHCR supporting delivery of a further 7,000 places in the hotspots
- Civil Protection Mechanism activated; offers received from 9 Member States
- Dedicated care programme for children set up by UNICEF, UNHCR and Save the Children in Kos, Lesbos and Idomeni; to be extended to Kos and Lesbos
- Medical screening in place in all functioning hotspots

RELOCATION



© European Commission

Commission Recommendations of 15 December

- Step up information provision to refugees about the relocation programme
- Greek Asylum service to hire additional staff
- Member States to substantially reduce the response time to process relocation applications to avoid withdrawals of applications
- Member states to substantially increase their pledges for relocation places

What has been done

- Asylum Service working in Lesvos; new office opened in Samos; provision of information and distribution of leaflets ensured by EASO
- 8 EASO mobile units operating on the islands
- IOM entrusted with the operational aspects of the relocation programme, 218 people relocated to other EU Member States
- 760 additional relocation candidates identified; 1081 relocation places made available by 15 Member States
- 37 persons to be hired by the Greek Asylum service before April, with up to 40 additional posts to be created by June; additional hires possible by January 2017
- Member States should strictly apply the criteria foreseen under the Council Decision when rejecting relocation applications

RETURN

Commission Recommendations of 15 December

- Develop a clear strategy for forced returns identifying priority third countries
- Step up forced as well as voluntary returns
- Improve conditions in the closed pre-removal centres
- Promote information concerning Assisted Voluntary Return to migrants in the hotspot areas
- Commission to step up engagement with third countries on readmission

What has been done

- Return decisions now being issued through a simplified screening and processing regime
- Emergency Assisted Voluntary Return scheme put in place – with almost 1,000 returns so far; tendering process ongoing for permanent scheme
- Emergency forced return programme financed by EU but not yet put out to tender
- Urgent work still needed on conditions in detention centres
- IOM return office established in Lesvos
- Further work to enhance implementation of Greek-Turkish readmission agreement necessary
- Commission in discussions with Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan on readmission

IMPROVING BORDER MANAGEMENT

Commission Recommendations of 15 December

- Member States to pledge staff and equipment to ensure Frontex operations can be carried out
- Define and carry out deployment of Frontex operation on Northern Greek border

What has been done

- Frontex deployment launched in Idomeni region near Greek border with former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; additional resources to be deployed
- Rapid Border Intervention Team (RABIT) activated and operating in the Aegean islands with 503 experts deployed (302 from Member States, and 201 from Greece)
- 83% of the required coverage pledged by Member States for Frontex operations.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- The Commission has awarded **€42 million** in emergency funding
- The Commission has made available **€509,4 million** for migration and border management from 2014-20 to facilitate reception, returns, and relocation in Greece.



The Commission has made available a total of €104 million to IOM and UNCHR in support of the relocation process and reception capacities in Greece.