



## Managing the Refugee Crisis: Commission reports on progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement

Brussels, 15 June 2016

**The Commission has today adopted its second report on the EU-Turkey Statement showing that while there has been further good progress in its implementation, progress achieved so far remains fragile.**

Today, the Commission adopted its second report on the [EU-Turkey Statement](#) showing that while there has been further good progress in its implementation, progress achieved so far remains fragile. The continued successful implementation depends mainly on the political determination of all parties involved. The sharp and continued decrease of people crossing irregularly or losing their lives in the Aegean on their way from Turkey into Greece is proof of the Statement's effectiveness so far and also shows that the business model of smugglers can be broken. Member States have also increased their efforts on resettlement – offering legal and safe pathways as an alternative. Return operations have continued to be carried out. All Member States have sent their contribution certificates for the Facility for Refugees in Turkey which will allow for the accelerated disbursement of the Facility to be delivered and the first €1 billion to start benefiting refugees by the end of the summer. Since the publication on 4 May of the Third Progress report on the implementation of Turkey's Visa Liberalisation Roadmap, progress has also continued towards fulfilling the remaining benchmarks of the visa liberalisation roadmap.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The EU-Turkey Statement is delivering results: migrants see that it is not worth risking their lives on smugglers' boats and we are on track to contract €1 billion of projects under the Refugee Facility by the end of this summer. But now is not the moment to sit back. We need to fully implement all elements of the Statement. This includes stepping up resettlement and increasing Greece's capacity to address the humanitarian situation and deal with asylum applications in line with EU law. The Turkish authorities also need to complete the implementation of the visa liberalisation roadmap."*

Whilst the success achieved so far remains fragile, today's Report confirms the EU-Turkey Statement continues to deliver concrete results, with joint efforts by the Greek and Turkish authorities, the Commission, Member States and EU agencies making headway in operationalising the Statement:

- **Considerably reduced irregular crossings:** 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 number of irregular crossings since 1 May is down to 47.
- **Return of irregular migrants from Greece to Turkey:** Since the Statement took effect on 20 March, 462 irregular migrants who have not applied for asylum, including 31 Syrians, have been returned to Turkey from Greece, in accordance with EU and international law and in full respect of the principle of *non-refoulement*.
- **"One for One" Resettlement from Turkey to the EU:** Substantial progress has been made on establishing an operational framework for carrying out resettlement operations from Turkey to the EU, aimed at both helping to alleviate the situation in Turkey and to meet the EU's commitment to provide legal pathways to the EU for victims of the Syrian crisis, sending a clear message to Syrian refugees in Turkey that there is a legal pathway instead of dangerous irregular crossings. A total of 511 Syrians have been resettled so far from Turkey to the EU under the 1:1 scheme (additional 408 since the First progress report) – substantially exceeding the number of returns from Greece to Turkey. A Resettlement Team, set up by the Commission at the EU Delegation in Ankara, coordinates and assist Member States' operations and liaisons with Turkish authorities, the UNHCR and the IOM.
- **Visa liberalisation:** On 4 May, the Commission published its Third progress report on the implementation of Turkey's Visa Liberalisation Roadmap and proposed lifting the visa requirements for the citizens of Turkey, under the understanding that the Turkish authorities will fulfil, as a matter of urgency and as they committed to do on 18 March 2016, the outstanding seven benchmarks. Since 4 May, further progress has been made, notably with the entry into force of the EU-Turkey readmission agreement that still requires a final decision on actual application. The

Commission continues to support Turkey in the work that still needs to be done to fulfil the remaining benchmarks and invites Turkey to take these measures as soon as possible to enable the EU to lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens.

- **Facility for Refugees in Turkey:** Further EU financial support through the Facility for Refugees in Turkey has been delivered to support refugees and host communities in Turkey and programming and project preparation has been accelerated. So far, €150 million under the EU budget has been contracted; out of which around €105 million has been disbursed to notably cover expenses for food, health care, accommodation and access to education. In addition to the €1 billion provided by the EU budget, all EU Member States have now sent in their contribution certificates for the €2 billion pledged for 2016-2017. The Commission will do all in its power to accelerate disbursement of the Facility, in close cooperation with Turkish authorities, committing for both humanitarian and non-humanitarian needs contracting €1 billion before the end of the summer.
- **Upgrading the Customs Union:** The Commission is advancing in the preparation of an Impact Assessment and a public consultation has recently been concluded. It is expected that draft negotiating directives will then be prepared for adoption by the Commission in the 4th quarter of 2016 and tabled to the Council.
- **Accession process:** The Commission tabled the Draft Common Position on Chapter 33 (financial and budgetary provisions) in the Council on 29 April, enabling the Council to decide on the opening of this Chapter by end of June. In addition, preparatory work continues at an accelerated pace to make progress on five Chapters, without prejudice to Member States' positions in accordance with the existing rules. Preparatory work has been finalised in the area of energy; the Commission will finalise the documents on the judiciary and fundamental rights by the end of June; the Commission finalised the Common Position on education and culture on 2 May 2016; and the EEAS updated screening report on foreign, security and defence policy, was issued on 20 May.
- **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, almost half of which has already been contracted.

In the next implementation phase, the Commission concludes that urgent attention should be given by Greece to increase its capacity in processing asylum applications and appeals on an individual basis and in the most timely manner to ensure returns and readmissions, notably through the use of the safe third country concept. Greece should also enhance the reception capacity on the islands and improve the day to day management and coordination of the hotspots, with the coordinated support of the EU and its Member States. Member States should build on the results achieved so far step up their efforts in order to increase substantially the number of resettlements. Equally, Turkey needs to take the necessary measures to fulfil the remaining visa liberalisation benchmarks as soon as possible in order to enable the EU to lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens.

The Commission will present its third report on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement in September 2016.

## Background

In line with the [EU-Turkey Statement](#) from 18 March 2016, all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands and whose applications for asylum have been declared inadmissible should be returned to Turkey. This temporary and extraordinary step is designed to end human suffering by showing clearly that there is no benefit in following the route offered by the smugglers.

Under the Statement, the EU will resettle a Syrian from Turkey to the EU for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands. Priority is given to migrants who have not previously entered or tried to enter the EU irregularly, within the framework of the existing commitments.

The implementation of the Statement requires huge operational efforts from all involved, and, on the EU-side, most of all from Greece. Greece and Turkey are the two governments in charge of implementation. It is their authorities who have to do the legal and operational work and ensure that EU and international law is respected at all stages of the process. The Commission has been working closely with the Greek and Turkish authorities to ensure the necessary improvements in terms of practical and logistical arrangements and human resources to ensure the smooth implementation of returns and is assisting Greece with advice, expertise and support from the EU budget. President Juncker immediately appointed an EU Coordinator and reinforced the existing Commission team already on the ground in Greece. The EU Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of the support provided to the Greek authorities by the Commission, the EU agencies, and the other EU Member

States, and the coordination of Member States' actions to implement the resettlement programme from Turkey.

### **For More Information**

Communication: [Second Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement](#)

[Annex](#)

MEMO: [Implementing the EU-Turkey Agreement – Questions and Answers](#)

FACTSHEET: [Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#)

FACTSHEET: [Managing the refugee crisis: EU financial support to Greece](#)

[Operational implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement](#): Member States' pledges and deployments for Frontex and EASO operations - returns and resettlements

[EU-Turkey Statement](#) of 18 March

[EU-Turkey Action Plan of 15 October](#), activated on 29 November

[Appointment of the EU Coordinator](#)

[European Agenda on Migration](#)

IP/16/2181

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