

Thursday 18 May 2017

P8_TA(2017)0230

Making relocation happen**European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2017 on making relocation happen (2017/2685(RSP))**

(2018/C 307/21)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to Council Decision (EU) 2016/1754 of 29 September 2016 amending Decision (EU) 2015/1601 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its position of 9 September 2015 on the proposal for a Council decision establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to its position of 17 September 2015 on the proposal for a Council decision establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy, Greece and Hungary ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to its position of 15 September 2016 on the proposal for a Council decision amending Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to the eleven Commission reports on relocation and resettlement,
 - having regard to the statements by the Council and the Commission of 16 May 2017 on making relocation happen,
 - having regard to the study carried out for its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, ‘Implementation of the 2015 Council Decisions establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece’, published in March 2017,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, following the consultation procedure laid down in Article 78(3) of the TFEU, Parliament adopted its position in support of the relocation decisions by a large majority;
- B. whereas the relocation decisions were adopted as an urgent solidarity measure in the absence of a European asylum system based on responsibility-sharing which is still not in place;
- C. whereas Member States have committed to relocating 160 000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece; whereas under Council Decision (EU) 2016/1754 54 000 of those places can be used for the admission of Syrian refugees from Turkey;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 239, 15.9.2015, p. 146.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 248, 24.9.2015, p. 80.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 268, 1.10.2016, p. 82.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0306.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0324.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0354.

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- D. whereas the UK has chosen not to opt into this mechanism, while Ireland has opted in; whereas Denmark has chosen not to participate on a voluntary basis, while three associated states chose to take part;
- E. whereas as of 27 April 2017 only 17 903 asylum seekers had been relocated, 12 490 from Greece and 5 413 from Italy; whereas this amounts to just 11 % of the total obligation;
- F. whereas the number of people eligible for relocation present in Italy and Greece is currently below what is foreseen in the Council decisions; whereas so far 26 997 eligible applicants have been registered in Greece while Member States have formally pledged 19 603 relocation places; whereas so far 8 000 eligible applicants have been registered in Italy while Member States have formally pledged 10 659 places; whereas the number of pledges is generally significantly higher than the number of people actually relocated;
- G. whereas only asylum seekers who were already present in Greece before 20 March 2016 are in fact regarded as eligible for relocation; whereas the relocation decisions do not include such a cut-off date for eligibility and were not amended to that effect;
- H. whereas only asylum seekers belonging to a nationality for which the average recognition rate is 75 % or higher, according to the latest available quarterly Eurostat data, are eligible for relocation; whereas Iraqis are no longer eligible for relocation, as their average recognition rate has dropped below 75 %; whereas the European Parliament, in its position of 15 September 2016 on a proposal by the Commission for amending Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601, demanded that Afghans should also be available for relocation; whereas Afghans were the second largest group of asylum seekers which the Union had to deal with in 2016; whereas 56,7 % of them were granted asylum; whereas by far the greatest number of Afghans arrive in Greece; whereas many of them are unaccompanied minors;
- I. whereas 62 300 asylum seekers and migrants are still present in Greece;
- J. whereas Italy marked a new record in terms of arrivals in 2016, with 181 436 (18 % more than in 2015), of whom 14 % were unaccompanied minors; whereas 20 700 Eritreans who are eligible for relocation arrived in 2016, but so far Italy has registered only about a quarter of them for relocation;
- K. whereas in Italy in 2016 the limited number of asylum applicants relocated to other Member States was significantly lower than the number of asylum seekers transferred by Member States to Italy under the Dublin Regulation;
- L. whereas the Commission, in its 8th report on relocation and resettlement, set a monthly relocation target, repeated in the subsequent reports, of 3 000 asylum seekers from Greece and 1 500 from Italy (as of 1 April 2017), in order to facilitate and accelerate relocation in an effective and smooth manner within the timeframe of the Council decisions;
- M. whereas the European Council, at its meeting of 15 December 2016, endorsed the joint action plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, which included the relocation target for Greece; whereas the European Council also reiterated its call for the further intensification of efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied minors;
- N. whereas the preconditions and operational infrastructure to make relocation happen are fully in place;
- O. whereas, despite some progress, only two Member States, Finland and Malta, are fully on track to fulfil their relocation obligations; whereas most Member States still lag far behind; whereas four Member States have been relocating on an extremely limited level; whereas two Member States are still not participating at all;

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- P. whereas only Finland is systematically taking unaccompanied minors; whereas in Italy around 5 000 relocation places are needed for them, while only one single unaccompanied minor has been relocated so far; whereas in Greece 163 further places are needed as of 12 April 2017;
- Q. whereas some Member States are using highly restrictive and discriminatory preferences, such as granting relocation only to single mothers, or excluding applicants of specific nationalities, such as Eritreans, and apply very extensive security checks; whereas in Greece 961 persons had been rejected as of 7 May 2017 for relocation by Member States;
- R. whereas Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 clearly stipulates that relocation measures do not absolve Member States from applying in full the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (Dublin) relating to family reunification, special protection of unaccompanied minors, and the discretionary clause concerning humanitarian grounds;
1. Acknowledges that some progress has been made, but expresses its disappointment regarding the unfulfilled commitments of Member States to solidarity and responsibility sharing;
 2. Welcomes the setting-up of an automated preference matching system by the European Asylum Support Office; calls on Member States not to resort to arbitrary decisions as to whether to accept a relocation request; urges Member States to base rejections solely on the specific grounds established in the Council decisions on relocation;
 3. Urges Member States to fulfil their obligations under the Council decisions and to systematically relocate asylum seekers from Greece and Italy, including those who arrived after 20 March 2016, until all those eligible have been relocated in an effective and smooth manner within the timeframe of the Council decisions; calls on Member States to pledge and transfer on a stable monthly basis;
 4. Calls on the Member States to give priority to the relocation of unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable applicants;
 5. Welcomes the Commission's announcement in its tenth report on relocation and resettlement of 2 March 2017 that it will not hesitate to make use of its powers under the Treaties if Member States do not increase their relocations soon; understands that this would include infringement proceedings;
 6. Insists that the legal obligations of Member States do not end after 26 September 2017 and that after that date they still have to relocate all eligible applicants who arrived up to that date;
 7. Highlights the fact that the Council has committed itself to the target of 160 000 relocations; notes that the number of persons eligible for relocation differs from this number; calls on the Commission to propose extending relocation measures until the adoption of the recast Dublin Regulation, in line with the terms of its proposal of 4 May 2016 (COM(2016)0270);
 8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
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