

Provisional version

Human rights implications of the European response to transit migration across the Mediterranean

Report¹

Rapporteur: Mr Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Greece, EPP/CD

Summary

More than a year since the adoption of the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016, the rapporteur argues that the agreement has delivered some positive results including the substantial decrease in both crossings and fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea between Turkey and the Greek islands. As a consequence, the situation in Greece has largely improved in terms of reception, registration and asylum processing despite the fact that it has become a destination country. However, some outstanding concerns still persist and require further efforts and improvements.

Unrelated to the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, the situation in Italy has aggravated following an increased number of arrivals from African countries, slow asylum procedures, and almost inexistent return policies for rejected asylum seekers.

The situation of unaccompanied minors in both frontline countries is of utmost concern and should be addressed as a matter of absolute priority.

The draft resolution identifies and recommends to the countries concerned the introduction of a number of measures and actions which could contribute to the improvement of the situation in the short and long terms.

¹ Reference to Committee: Doc. 14168, Reference 4252 of 25 November 2016.

Contents	Page
A. Draft resolution	3
B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Varvitsiotis, rapporteur	7
1. Introduction	7
2. Background information.....	8
3. Impact of the European response on the human rights situation in the countries of first arrival ..	9
3.1. Greece	9
3.2. Italy	12
3.3. Turkey.....	14
4. Relocation and resettlement mechanisms	14
4.1. Relocation.....	14
4.2. Resettlement	15
5. Outstanding human rights concerns.....	15
6. Conclusions	17

A. Draft resolution²

1. More than a year since the adoption of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly acknowledges that the implemented measures have delivered some tangible results with regard to the challenges underlying the refugee and migration crisis. While in the weeks before the implementation of the Statement the daily average number of people arriving to the Greek islands was almost 2 000, since then it has fallen to under 100 daily. The number of fatalities which amounted to 376 between January and 20 March 2016 dropped significantly in the corresponding period a year later when 13 people lost their lives.

2. In consequence, the situation in Greece has improved despite the fact that Greece has become a destination country where almost 100 per cent of people arriving request asylum. At present, there are 63 000 asylum seekers waiting in Greece for the outcome of their status determination procedure. Out of this figure, 14 000 people are confined to the islands. Thanks to the creation of hotspots, reception, registration and asylum processing have become much more efficient and, given continuous efforts of the Greek authorities and other stakeholders for improvement, they raise less concern than before. However, overall, reception conditions are still poor, and the situation of unaccompanied minors is of utmost concern. Out of 2 000 minors registered in Greece only 1 352 live in shelters adapted to their specific needs.

3. The Assembly notes that concerns relating to possible returns of Syrian refugees to Turkey as a “first country of asylum” or “safe third country” under the EU-Turkey Statement have proved to be unfounded as no Syrian asylum seeker (or any other nationality) is returned without the application for asylum being examined on merits in Greece. As of April 2017, the total number of returned since the EU-Turkey Statement was 1 487. The examination of all applications on merits is the result of the consistent position of the Greek Appeal Committee in this respect.

4. Furthermore, the Assembly notes that the concerns relating to the detention of asylum seekers in hotspots have not been confirmed either; once registered, asylum seekers can enter in and out of hotspots freely although the living conditions are far from satisfactory.

5. A direct consequence of the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and the closure of borders was an overall decrease, by 83%, in the number of new arrivals in the countries of the Western Balkan and Hungary. In terms of migrants stranded in these countries as of the end of 2016, the majority remain in Serbia (5 633) and Bulgaria (5 560).

6. The implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the closure of the borders in the Western Balkan Route arguably have had no impact on the number of people using the Central Mediterranean Route between North Africa and Italy. Even if the number of arrivals to Italy has increased by more than 30% in the first five months of 2017, this phenomenon is linked with the unstable situation in Libya and the growing inflows of migrants from different African countries.

7. The reception conditions and asylum procedures in Italy, even if also improving, require urgent action. As with Greece, Italy has become a destination country and continuous mass arrivals risk saturating the country's reception capacities. The question of return of rejected asylum seekers should be given immediate consideration; the large number of irregular migrants creates threats for the whole asylum system and social stability.

8. The arrival of migrants to Italy is to a large extent dependent on the inability of Libyan authorities to control their borders. While the level of search and rescue operations should be maintained, the European Union should increase its efforts to effectively combat smugglers' networks in the Mediterranean and enhance co-operation with the Libyan Coast Guard.

9. The Assembly stresses that the lack of accessible and safe pathways forces refugees and migrants to take enormous risks by trying to cross the sea. In the use of existing legal ways to enter Europe including family reunification or resettlements would substantially contribute to reducing irregular migration across the Mediterranean.

² Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the Committee on 2 June 2017.

10. The Assembly also refers to its recent Resolutions dealing with various aspects of the mass arrivals of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean, and in particular Resolution [2109 \(2016\) on](#) “The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement of 18 March 2016”, Resolution [2147 \(2017\) on](#) “The need to reform European migration policies”, Resolution [2118 \(2016\)](#); on “Refugees in Greece, challenges and risks”, Resolution [2107 \(2016\)](#) on “A stronger European response to the Syrian refugee crisis”, Resolution [2108 \(2016\)](#) on “Human rights of refugees and migrants- the situation in the Western Balkans”, Resolution [2088 \(2016\)](#) “The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration”, Resolution [2072 \(2015\) on](#) “After Dublin – the urgent need for a real European asylum system”, Resolution [2089 \(2016\)](#) on “Organised crime and migrants”, and Resolution [2136 \(2016\)](#) on “Harmonising the protection of unaccompanied minors in Europe”.

11. The Assembly calls on the European Union:

11.1. with regard to reducing the number of crossings and saving lives, to:

11.1.1. maintain at least the present level of search and rescue operations;

11.1.2. enhance the fight against smugglers and traffickers;

11.1.3. step up its co-operation with the Libyan Coast Guards, and in particular ensure funding for training programmes, assist in establishing a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and support the provision of additional patrolling vessels and ensure their maintenance;

11.1.4. engage with the Libyan authorities to ensure that the conditions in centres for migrants are improved with a particular attention given to vulnerable persons and minors. Step up co-operation with the UNHCR and IOM in this respect; support capacity building in migration management for the Libyan authorities and launch co-operation programmes with Libyan host authorities;

11.1.5. mobilise funding for migration-related projects in North Africa in the framework of the EU Trust Fund for Africa;

11.1.6. launch a serious reflection on the possible establishment of hotspots outside of Europe in full compliance with international human rights standards.

11.2. with regard to reception and living conditions in the countries of first arrival and transit, to:

11.2.1. increase financial, human and administrative support with a view to improving reception and living conditions;

11.2.2. ensure transparency, monitoring and accountability of financing procedures and to this end privilege public authorities as first instance beneficiaries.

11.3. with regard to asylum procedures, to:

11.3.1. continue ensuring the necessary support through EU relevant agencies to the national asylum services in front line member States, and in particular remedy the current shortfall of experts from EASO by calling for more pledges from member States and extending the duration of mandate of individual experts;

11.3.2. review, and redefine, if necessary, the mandates of relevant agencies providing expert, financial and technical resources, advice and co-ordination to Greek and Italian asylum services with a view to eliminating existing shortcomings and increase efficiency of their actions;

11.3.3. address, as a matter of urgency, the question of accommodation and processing of applications of unaccompanied minors;

11.3.4. appoint a child protection officer for every hotspot and refugee camp;

11.3.5. consider the extension of the relocation mechanism beyond September 2017 and redefine the criteria for eligibility in particular to include Iraqis and Afghans;

11.3.6. step up the pace of resettlements from Turkey;

11.3.7. speed up the work on the reform of the Common European Asylum System including the revision of the Dublin Regulation and the modalities of applying the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the future;

11.3.8. ensure that people who are found not to be in need of international protection are returned in dignity to their countries of origin to the extent that it is possible;

11.3.9. Facilitate returns from Greece and Italy through the bilateral agreements with the countries of origin of migrants;

11.3.10. step up financing for voluntary returns including the creation of special centres for people awaiting return;

12. The Assembly calls on the Greek authorities:

12.1. with regard to reception conditions, to:

12.1.1. continue increasing reception capacities on the islands and on the mainland and ensure that all unsuitable sites are closed as a matter of urgency;

12.1.2. step up efforts aimed at prevention and fight against sexual and gender based violence as well as all kinds of exploitation in the refugee sites;

12.1.3. focus more attention on the specific needs of unaccompanied and separated children, in particular by ensuring specialised support and care, appropriate living conditions and paving ways to normality and integration within the host society.

12.2. with regard to asylum procedures, to:

12.2.1. speed up the processing of asylum applications from registration to appeal, in line with EU and international law standards;

12.2.2. adopt, as a matter of urgency, standard operating procedures which constitute an essential element for clarifying responsibilities and harmonising procedures in hotspots and other disembarkation ports;

12.2.3. appoint permanent coordinators in hotspots with a view to improving coordination, ensuring effective communication and information sharing by different stakeholders and taking full responsibility for the overall management of hotspots;

12.2.4. adopt legislation on guardianship in line with European best practices; and implement it without any further delays as soon as it has entered into force;

12.2.5. ensure that all NGO's involved in the hosting and aid process are in line with EU and state regulations.

12.3. with regard to the absorption of EU funding:

12.3.1. speed up the process of the use of EU long term funding for the reception and hosting facilities;

12.3.2. activate the programmes aimed at the monitoring of the Aegean Sea area using the EU long term funds

13. The Assembly calls on the Italian authorities:

13.1. with regard to reception conditions, to:

13.1.1. increase the number of adequate facilities to accommodate and process unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable asylum seekers;

13.1.2. establish national standards for refugees camps and centres, and increase their monitoring and accountability;

13.1.3. step up efforts aimed at prevention and fight against sexual and gender based violence as well as all kinds of exploitation in the refugee sites.

13.2. with regard to asylum procedures, to:

13.2.1. review asylum procedures in order to increase their efficiency in the light of the considerably increased number of requests for asylum;

13.2.2. address, as a matter of urgency, the question of processing of applications of unaccompanied minors and in particular, clarify the procedures to enable their relocation;

13.2.3. ensure quick and full implementation of Law 47 on unaccompanied minors (the so called Legge Zampa).

14. The Assembly reiterates its longstanding calls to the Turkish authorities to:

14.1. withdraw its geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees;

14.2. ensure that all migrants returned to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement are treated in compliance with international human rights standards including with respect to detention;

14.3. refrain from threatening to withdraw from observing the obligations described in the EU Turkey statement.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Varvitsiotis, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. The Assembly has been following the ongoing migration and refugee crisis and its various issues from a very early stage. The reports prepared by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and ensuing resolutions raised humanitarian concerns and stressed the need to fully respect the human rights of migrants and refugees, and at the same time sought to identify measures which would contribute to the better management of the crisis and increased co-operation between the Council of Europe member States.

2. A number of reports already submitted to the Assembly or still under preparation deal with questions which are of direct relevance to the present report. As Rapporteur, I have been confronted with the difficult task of having to prepare an thorough report on the subject while trying to avoid – in so far as possible – repetition, duplication and interference with other rapporteurs' mandates.

3. In order to achieve this objective, I have decided to invite readers to consult the most relevant texts prepared by the Committee over the last year with a view to acquiring a full picture of the Assembly's position on different aspects of the ongoing migration and refugee crisis. These reports and resolutions are easily consultable on the PACE website, and include a report prepared under urgent procedure on "The need to reform European migration policies", [Doc. 14248](#), Resolution [2147 \(2017\)](#); "Refugees in Greece, challenges and risks", [Doc. 14082](#), Resolution [2118 \(2016\)](#); "A stronger European response to the Syrian refugee crisis", [Doc. 14014](#), Resolution [2107 \(2016\)](#); "Human rights of refugees and migrants- the situation in the Western Balkans", [Doc. 14013](#), Resolution [2108 \(2016\)](#); "The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration", [Doc. 13942](#), Resolution [2088 \(2016\)](#); "After Dublin – the urgent need for a real European asylum system", [Doc. 13866](#), Resolution [2072 \(2015\)](#), "Organised crime and migrants", [Doc. 13941](#), Resolution [2089 \(2016\)](#); and "Harmonising the protection of unaccompanied minors in Europe", [Doc. 14142](#), Resolution [2136 \(2016\)](#).

4. At this very moment, the Committee is working on a number of reports which touch upon the subject of the present report and deal with questions which can hardly be avoided in this text. I particularly draw your attention to the report under preparation on "A comprehensive humanitarian and political response to the migration and refugee crisis in Europe" which is foreseen for the migration debate in June 2017 where it will be discussed with the present report.

5. However, undoubtedly the most relevant text with regard to the present report is the report on "The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement of 18 March 2016", [Doc. 14028](#), Resolution [2109 \(2016\)](#). This agreement – given its legal status, a more appropriate denomination might be "statement" or "deal" – along with a number of other instruments including Resettlement and Relocation Schemes, creation of hotspots, financial assistance and enhanced co-operation with the countries of origin and transit, have had a great impact on the situation of refugees in Greece, and indeed, in many other countries of Europe.

6. The Assembly's position contained in Resolution [2109 \(2016\)](#), which was adopted following the debate on the above mentioned report, was sceptical – not to say critical – vis-à-vis the Statement, and a number of concerns on human rights issues were voiced. I strongly recommend readers to consult this text before getting acquainted with the present report.

7. Now, more than a year since the EU-Turkey Summit of 18 March 2016, I intend to take stock of the results of the implementation of the measures agreed on that day. In this respect, I will examine and assess to what extent the concerns expressed by the Assembly in June 2016 have been addressed and what progress has been achieved in the accomplishment of other relevant recommendations included in the texts listed above and adopted by the Assembly.

8. I will look more closely into the situation in Greece and Italy, in particular into the reception and living conditions in hotspots, the efficiency of the processing of asylum applications, as well as the relocation and resettlement mechanisms. I will also examine the question of movement of migrants within Europe and the situation of those who are confined to the Balkans.

9. To gather relevant first-hand information, I carried out a fact-finding visit to Greece (Athens and Lesbos) on 29-30 March and to Italy (Rome and Trapani) on 10-11 May 2017. I also intend to go to Turkey in June 2017 (exact dates to be fixed; the findings of this visit will be included in an addendum to the present report) to meet different stakeholders and get acquainted with the reality in the field, assess the efficiency of procedures and living and material conditions in hotspots and reception centres.

10. In order to complement this information, but also to allow members of the Committee to hear first-hand information and hold an exchange of views – I organised a hearing during the April 2017 part-session with the participation of a representative of the European Commission.

11. In conclusion, I am trying to identify measures which could be recommended to the member States and the European Union with a view to addressing outstanding concerns.

12. By the decision of the Bureau following the proposal of the Committee, the present report is scheduled to be debated in the Assembly on the Migration Day to be held on 28 June 2017 during the Third Part Session. This implies the adoption of a draft resolution by the Committee at our meeting on 2 June 2017.

2. Background information

13. A sharp increase in the numbers of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea over the last several years has resulted in an unprecedented migratory and refugee crisis in Europe. At its peak, in 2015, over 1 million people arrived on European shores as compared to 204 500 in 2014, 60 000 in 2013 and an estimated 40 000 a year on average between 1998 and 2012.

14. Two of the main countries of first arrival – Greece and Italy – were differently affected. In 2014, as many as 34 500 refugees and migrants entered Europe through Greece, and 170 000 through Italy. In 2015, 853 600 arrived through Greece and 183 600 through Italy.³ The figures in 2016 were, respectively 176 000 and 181 000.

15. Perilous journeys across the Mediterranean have taken an inevitable death toll: over 5 000 migrants lost their lives in 2016 as compared to 3 800 in 2015. 1 309 people drowned in the first five months of this year alone.⁴ As stressed in previous Assembly reports,⁵ no save and rescue operations can guarantee full protection of human lives and prevent all deaths at sea. As long as people undertake the risk of crossing the sea, there will be loss of lives.

16. Reception capacities of the countries of first arrival proved to be entirely insufficient and asylum procedures turned out to be dysfunctional when confronted with huge numbers of applications. People arriving to the Greek islands in 2015 were not even properly registered and they headed immediately to the northern countries via the Western Balkans route which led to enormous pressure on countries of transit and final destination as well as serious human rights concerns. Measures subsequently introduced by some of these countries including closure of borders led to the concentration of people in informal camps in drastic conditions.

17. These unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants arriving in Western Europe have generated political tensions in many States and an institutional crisis in the European Union. Europe's chaotic response has revealed the inadequacy of existing legal instruments including the Dublin Regulation and migration policies. The failure of the common European approach became even more evident in the light of individual national policies ranging from most restrictive to most generous and often contradicting each other. The following debates at EU level on responsibility sharing and repatriation on the basis of voluntary or compulsory quotas demonstrated the inability of European leaders to address the problem.

18. Against this background, the EU-Turkey summit of 18 March 2016 issued a Statement designed as a partial response to the inflow of refugees and migrants from Turkish territory to the Greek islands. Its objective was to "break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk", by providing the return to Turkey of all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as

³ The number of arrivals in other Mediterranean countries was much smaller in 2016 and amounted to 189 people for Cyprus and 8 162 for Spain.

⁴ As of 10 May 2017. Source: IOM website.

⁵ "The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration", [Doc. 13942](#), Resolution [2088 \(2016\)](#); "Organised crime and migrants", [Doc. 13941](#), Resolution [2089 \(2016\)](#).

from 20 March 2016. For every Syrian returned to Turkey from Greece, another Syrian refugee was to be resettled directly to the EU from Turkey. Other Syrian refugees were also to be resettled under a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme. Turkey committed itself to take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration from its territory to the EU. Other provisions of the Statement concerned financial assistance allocated to Turkey (6 billion euro by the end of 2018), prospects for a visa liberalisation programme for Turkey, re-launching of the accession process and the upgrading of the Customs Union.

19. The first reactions to the Statement were not enthusiastic. Human rights organisations raised several issues of concern.⁶ The PACE was also critical and the report on “The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement” debated in June 2016 referred to a number of potential human rights abuses. In particular, it questioned the principle of new arrivals being systematically detained in inadequate conditions on an uncertain legal basis. It also voiced the concern that returns to Turkey may not meet the requirements of EU and international law as Turkey cannot be considered under current circumstances a safe third country. It also pointed out that the Greek asylum system lacks the capacity to process so many applications and that there is inadequate access to an effective remedy against return to Turkey. Finally, it stressed that resettlement of Syrian refugees should not be linked to the number of returns.

20. More than a year after the implementation of the Statement and other complementary measures, I will try to assess, in the next chapters, to what extent the concerns expressed by the Assembly have been addressed and what was the impact of the European response on the human rights situation of refugees and migrants in Greece and Italy.

3. Impact of the European response on the human rights situation in the countries of first arrival

3.1. Greece

21. The implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 led to a significant decrease in arrivals in Greece during the second half of the year. While the total number of refugees and migrants who arrived to this country in 2016 amounted to 176 000, the vast majority of them, namely 125 000, came in the first three months of the year, before the conclusion of the Statement. At the same time, arrivals in Italy continued at a steady pace of approximately 180 000 throughout the whole year. In total, 387 000 refugees and migrants arrived to Italy and Greece in 2016 as compared to over one million a year before. .

22. This trend continued in the first four months of 2017. Total arrivals in Greece between January and 10 May amounted to 5 601 persons. In Italy the number of arrivals during the same time amounted to 45 086. Over this period, 37 deaths at sea were registered in Greece, while 1 222 deaths were registered in Italy.

23. In consequence, the Central Mediterranean Route (Libya-Italy) has once again become the dominant route for refugees and migrants to reach Europe as it had been before the surge in arrivals through the Eastern Mediterranean in late 2015 and early 2016. However, during my visit to Italy I was assured by different interlocutors that the EU-Turkey Statement has had no impact on the number of people following the Central Mediterranean Route. I will come to this question in more detail in the next sub-chapter.

24. The overall situation of refugees and migrants in Greece has considerably evolved. At present there are over 63 000 asylum seekers waiting for the outcome of the status determination procedure in Greece. Out of this figure, over 14 000 are still confined to the islands, a further 14 000 are accommodated in the EU funded flat scheme and over 33 000 live in sub-standard reception conditions on mainland Greece.

25. Five hotspots have been opened in Greece (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, and Kos) with a total capacity of 5 450 for the reception of people remaining on the islands whose applications are still being processed as well as for new arrivals. Over 7 000 of those who are confined to the islands live in alternative accommodation.

26. On average 50 people cross daily the Aegean Sea from Turkey.

⁶ See: Medecins sans frontières: Why the EU's deal with Turkey is no solution to the “crisis” affecting Europe, 18 March 2016 available on the MSF website; Human Rights Watch letter to EU leaders on refugees of 15 March 2016 available on HRW website; Amnesty International: EU-Turkey refugee deal: a historic blow to rights, 18 March 2016, available on AI website; UNHCR: legal considerations on the return of asylum seekers and refugees from Greece to Turkey as part of EU-Turkey co-operation, 23 March 2016, available on UNHCR website.

27. The creation of hotspots approach was adopted to address arrivals in a more orderly way. They became indispensable following the EU-Turkey Statement when almost 100% of new arrivals applied for asylum. Indeed, before the closure of the border between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a very small percentage (2.7%) submitted applications in Greece and the majority were heading to the northern countries. Many were leaving the islands without any registration thus posing serious security concerns.

28. Hotspot centres both in Greece and Italy serve the purpose of identification, registration, fingerprinting, debriefing, processing of asylum requests and return operations. National asylum authorities are assisted by EASO, Frontex and Europol. The work of these agencies is complementary to one another. Those claiming asylum are channelled into a national asylum procedure with EASO support teams helping to process asylum cases as quickly as possible. Frontex helps national services by coordinating the return of those who are considered not to be in need of international protection. Europol and Eurojust assist the State services with investigations to dismantle the smuggling and trafficking networks. The support teams work in close partnership and under the full control of the national authorities of the host country and only the national authorities are competent to establish coordination and standard operating procedures. A number of international (UNHCR, IOM) and national organisations and NGOs are involved in legal and psychological assistance to newcomers as well as monitoring of the compliance with human rights standards.

29. One of the concerns expressed by my interlocutors in Greece related to the delay in adoption, by the Government, of standard operating procedures for hotspots and appointment of coordinators who would contribute to the increase in efficiency of the work of hotspots.

30. During my fact-finding visit, I visited one of the busiest hotspots called Moria located on the east of the island of Lesbos. It has received 708 asylum seekers since the beginning of 2017. In comparison, in 2016, 91 506 people arrived in Lesbos by sea (56% of the total arrivals to Greece). The main nationalities arriving to Lesbos this year have been the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Congo, and Iraq. The majority of arriving asylum seekers (65%) are young single men. Children (both accompanied and non-accompanied) make up 10%.

31. According to the Greek authorities, during my visit, 3 020 asylum seekers and migrants were being hosted in Moria in 51 refugee housing units and 198 prefabricated containers. I was assured that all vulnerable cases including unaccompanied minors (342 persons) were being accommodated outside the hotspot in hotels, host families and apartments run by UNHCR's local partner Iliaktida. UNHCR provides support to the Greek authorities and coordinates with NGOs for the management of sites in Lesbos.

32. I have visited Moria in my national capacity on several occasions in the past two years, and I have to recognise a great improvement achieved over the last year in reception conditions. The site is still severely overcrowded and living conditions are harsh but the progress is visible. During my last visit, infrastructural works such as construction of footings and retaining walls, excavation, levelling, gravelling, concreting and fencing were underway.

33. At the same time, UNHCR, in close cooperation with local authorities is searching for alternative accommodation outside of the hotspot.

34. The problem of poor living conditions is a direct consequence of the duration of processing of asylum applications as asylum seekers are not transferred to mainland Greece before the positive outcome of the procedure. Let me recall that one of the most outstanding concerns expressed by human rights organisations in the wake of the EU-Turkey Summit related to the insufficient capacity on the islands for assessing asylum claims. These concerns seems to have been proven right, since despite the improvement, living conditions on most islands are still far from international standards.

35. The EU through its Agencies (EASO, FRONTEX, EUROPOL) has provided support to the Greek asylum services in terms of expertise, logistics and materials. As of April 2017, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has deployed 59 experts and 87 interpreters. Nevertheless, there are still shortfalls, and 41 more experts should be deployed shortly. However, as experts are normally only deployed for a limited period of up to six weeks, the agencies need to continuously make new requests to the member States to replace the departing experts. Needless to say that such frequent rotation has an inevitable impact on the efficiency of the work. Many

interlocutors stressed the need for the increase in number of experts and the prolongation of the duration of their deployment.

36. In Moria I had the chance to observe all stages of the reception procedure. On the very day of my visit, 46 asylum seekers landed on the island. They were transferred to the hotspot. All of them expressed the wish to submit applications for asylum. The registration is conducted within 24 hours, except for vulnerable cases (unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, families with small children) who are identified with the help of human rights workers and given priority. It includes identification, security screening and health control. Specially trained experts verify the exactitude of some declarations including native language or dialect spoken by the claimant, his knowledge of the realities of the place he allegedly lived in, and so on. At this stage, victims of different kinds of abuse (sexual abuse, torture) are also identified. Once the registration is completed, applicants can freely move on the island; but they cannot go to the mainland.

37. It usually takes 2 months before the first interview is conducted, during which time the application for asylum is established. I was told that each interview may last up to 9 hours and every interviewer receives 1 person per day. Each application is examined on merits but the duration of the determination procedure is different depending on nationality. If asylum status is granted, then the person is transferred to the mainland. If it is rejected, then, almost all applicants make an appeal. If the appeal is rejected, the person, if found, is detained (usually for no longer than one week) then returned to Turkey.

38. The IOM has been running a project called Assisted Voluntary Returns and Integration including administrative, financial and logistical support provided for irregular migrants who decide to return voluntarily to their country of origin in a dignified manner with concrete prospects for re-integration. Over 6 000 persons have been assisted in their return from Greece over the last two years.

39. My interlocutors involved in the asylum procedure were in agreement that once backlogs of applications are cleared, new applications will be dealt with in a smooth way. When the hotspots were established in late 2015, they were confronted with a huge number of applications of those asylum seekers who became stuck on the islands following the closure of the Greek-The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border. I was assured that all backlogs will be dealt with by the end of April 2017. From then on, the duration of status determination procedures on the islands should be considerably reduced. This assurance is still to be proven correct.

40. I should note that another concern expressed, inter alia, by the Assembly resolution on the Situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement relating to returns of Syrian refugees to Turkey as a "first country of asylum", or "safe third country" might be contrary to EU and/or international law as Turkey may not ensure protection that is "sufficient", however reports of onward refoulement of Syrians has been addressed as no Syrian refugees (or indeed, any other nationality) are returned without their applications for asylum being examined in Greece.

41. It was feared that remedies against decisions to return rejected asylum seekers to Turkey would not always have a suspensive effect as required by the ECHR. As I stated above, people are not returned before the appeal decision is delivered.

42. In April 2016, Greece adopted a new asylum law (Law 4375/2016) which provided for an admissibility assessment before considering an application on its merits. Until recently, only Syrians have been subject to the admissibility procedure (as according to the Statement, they should be returned to Turkey), with all other nationalities having their applications considered on merits.

43. According to the latest figures provided by the European Commission, arrivals continue to largely outpace the number of returns from the Greek islands to Turkey. As of April 2017, the total number of migrants returned since the date of the EU-Turkey Statement is 1 487. All of these returns were either voluntary or involuntary based on one of three grounds: the person did not apply for asylum, withdrew their asylum application after the first hearing or was rejected after the examination on the merits. These figures are insufficient in order to reduce the number of asylum seekers living in the overcrowded hot spots of the Eastern Aegean.

44. Another concern was also addressed related to the detention of asylum seekers in hotspots which might be incompatible with the requirements of the ECHR due notably to procedural failures undermining the legal grounds for detention and inadequate detention conditions: the time of detention does not exceed 25 days as provided for in the Greek Law 4375/2016 adopted on 2 April 2016. Indeed, the hotspots are not, as described by

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some human rights organisations, detention centres in the proper meaning of this word. Once registered, people can easily walk in and out thanks to badges which have been established for security reasons. Indeed, they are detained pending the return if the appeal is rejected, but the duration of detention does not exceed a week.

45. Moreover, contrary to fears expressed in the Assembly report, children and vulnerable persons are identified at a very early stage of the status determination procedure, and are not kept in detention. They do not remain in the hotspots either as they are systematically offered an alternative accommodation. Last year, the UNHCR with EU funding created over 20 000 accommodation places for relocation candidates and asylum seekers with specific needs, mostly through apartments, renovated buildings, hotels and host families. Further projects are underway. However, the situation of unaccompanied minors remains an outstanding concern, particularly in Italy, where their number is much higher than in Greece. I will develop this question in Chapter 5.

46. There are further concerns related to living conditions in the hotspots. They used to be highly overcrowded, and problems still exist particularly in Chios and Samos. The situation should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Proper reception capacities on the islands are foreseen for 7 450 people while the actual number of refugees and migrants is double that. Many asylum seekers have been transferred from the islands to the mainland.

47. Living conditions have also considerably improved in the mainland but they still remain a matter of concern. In Eidomeni, there are no longer any people camping at an informal site near the border but there are other camps which do not meet standards and should be upgraded and improved as a matter of urgency. The efforts of the Greek authorities together with UNHCR to identify and secure alternative accommodation should be commended. Long term solutions with a view to integrating those refugees who are likely to remain in Greece should be privileged.

48. There are substantial financial resources in the form of the UE long term and emergency funds allocated to Greece. However, the Greek authorities have not used the later at the satisfactory level, in particular for the monitoring of the Aegean Sea.

3.2. Italy

49. The situation in Italy seems to be more complex. 181 436 people, both refugees and migrants arrived in 2016 by sea. 90 per cent travelled by boat from Libya. The top two nationalities were Nigerians (21%) and Eritreans (11%). A striking feature is the change in profile of these asylum seekers including the increasing number of unaccompanied children, over 25 000 in 2016 (14%) which is double as compared to 2015. This development raises justified concerns about probable exploitation of these young people by organised criminal networks.

50. The number of people who arrived in the first four months of 2017 amounted to 45 000 and was higher by 36% in comparison with the same period of 2016 when 31 000 arrived. All of my interlocutors agreed, however, that this increase was not the consequence of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement. The persons using the Central Mediterranean Route (Nigerians, Eritreans, Guineans and other African nationalities) are of different nationalities from those who cross the Aegean Sea.

51. In recent months, one can observe an increase in the number of Bangladeshi nationals coming to Italy via Libya. I was told that these people frequently come to Libya - a country which in the past offered many job opportunities for migrant workers- in search of work, encouraged by traffickers. Once in Libya, they realise that the conditions promised by the traffickers do not correspond to reality and they undertake a perilous journey, facilitated by the traffickers, across the sea. The same pattern applies to other migrants who arrive to Libya from the south.

52. The boats and pontoons usually depart from a 20 kilometre long stretch of Libyan coastline. The absolute majority of them are completely unseaworthy and overcrowded, and despite increased efforts for save and rescue operations, the loss of lives cannot be eliminated. Over 1 200 people died in the first four months of 2017.

53. There are five hotspots in Italy (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Porto Empedocle, Taranto, and Trapani) with a total capacity of 1 600 which seems to be completely insufficient given the number of daily arrivals frequently reaching peaks of 2 000 or more per day. The national authorities, and in particular a dedicated Italian team

within the Ministry of the Interior, from the very beginning demonstrated strong support of hotspots and the related migration management. It drafted without delay Standard operating procedures which became operational in May 2016, involving in the process of elaboration and consultation all the main stakeholders, namely the Italian authorities, European Commission, Frontex, Europol, EASO, UNHCR and IOM. The swift adoption and implementation of these operating procedures has contributed greatly towards restructuring the hotspots approach in Italy. Coordination at the operational and local levels is fully satisfactory.

54. However, only about one third of arriving migrants and refugees disembark at the hotspot locations, while the majority land in other ports. The Italian authorities are implementing a new strategy, building upon the hotspot approach, aimed at upgrading other disembarkation ports with a view to enabling application of standard operating procedures.

55. According to the Italian authorities, this approach allows for the proper registration, identification and fingerprinting of approximately 97% of arriving migrants and refugees. The registration lasts up to 72 hours, then asylum seekers are distributed according to the agreed quotas to different regions in Italy where they are taken in charge by local authorities and accommodated in camps and alternative accommodation. The number of available places has been increased drastically over the last months. 176 000 asylum seekers remain at present in reception facilities.

56. Living conditions vary considerably from one place to another: while some of them are satisfactory; in others deficiencies are constantly identified. Among the reasons for these discrepancies are the lack of national standards and the fact that the accommodation centres are not run by specialised agencies.

57. In one of the camps based in Sicily called Mineo which accommodates around 4 000 asylum seekers, a criminal investigation into administrative mismanagement is underway.

58. The total capacity for reception is estimated at 200 000 people. Beyond this number, the humanitarian crisis will become a real threat. Given that the number of people arriving to Italy is on the rise, and the number of people leaving Italy is decreasing (also due to the more systematic controls at the northern borders), there is an urgent need to address this question.

59. As in Greece, almost 100% of people apply for asylum in contrast to previous years when migrants would head for the northern countries and did not want to diminish their chances of obtaining asylum there by applying in the first arrival country. In consequence, Italy, which used to be a transit country, has become a country of destination.

60. The procedure for consideration of asylum requests lasts approximately 60-80 days before the decision at the first instance is taken. The procedure is not adapted to the high numbers of applicants and should thus be revised. During this time, all applicants remain under the reception regime. The average rate of recognition is 43% (plus 10% of subsidiary protection). All applicants who have been rejected in the first instance have the right to appeal. Almost 60% of appeals are successful. Once the status is determined, the refugees and those who have been granted humanitarian status lose their right to accommodation and assistance but have the right to work.

61. The system of return of rejected asylum seekers is a total failure. In practice there are neither forced nor voluntary returns from Italy. The underlying reason is the lack of cooperation with the countries of origin. Failed asylum seekers become irregular migrants and the majority of them do not leave the country. Needless to say that this situation is highly unsatisfactory for both migrants and host communities as well as for the image of migrants in general.

62. A major concern for Italy, as already mentioned above, is the increasing number of unaccompanied minors. There is a shortage of facilities for minors in the regions where landings take place. As a consequence, minors stay in hotspots which are not adapted to their specific needs.

63. There are also increasing numbers of women arriving mainly from Nigeria which is a matter of utmost concern. According to social workers whom I met, almost all of these women have been sexually abused during the journey and often the abuse and exploitation continues in the camps. The majority of them have been victims of traffickers and are targets for exploitation by criminal networks in Europe. Here again, reception conditions are not systematically adapted to this vulnerable category of asylum seekers.

3.3. Turkey

64. According to UNHCR statistics, there are 2 900 000 refugees in Turkey.
65. According to statistics provided by the Turkish Coast Guard for 2016, as many as 37 060 irregular migrants were apprehended during their attempts to cross the Aegean Sea.
66. At the same time, 2 672 Syrian nationals were resettled from Turkey to other EU countries.
67. I intend to visit Turkey in June 2017 in order to get acquainted with the situation of refugees hosted in the country and returned migrants. I will include the findings of the visit in an addendum to the present report.

4. Relocation and resettlement mechanisms

4.1. Relocation

68. As part of the European response to the migratory and refugee crisis, the European Council adopted, in September 2015, the emergency relocation scheme under which asylum seekers with a high chance of having their applications successfully processed would be relocated from Greece and Italy to other EU member states and the processing of their applications would take place in these host countries.
69. The original commitment concerned the relocation of almost 160 000 people but it was scaled down to 98 255 in September 2016, when the European Council adopted an amendment to make 54 000 places not yet allocated available for the purpose of legally admitting Syrians from Turkey to the EU.
70. Amid divisive discussions on the voluntary or obligatory nature of repartitions quotas, as of 12 April 2017, a total number of only 16 340 people have been relocated (5 001 from Italy and 11 339 from Greece⁷).
71. In the light of unsatisfactory progress in relocations, in December 2016, the Commission called on member States individually to increase their efforts to meet the targets of 1 000 monthly relocations from Italy and 2 000 from Greece. Member States and Associated Countries (Switzerland, Norway and Liechtenstein) which were already participating actively in the relocation scheme responded positively and communicated their planned monthly pledges.
72. Since the beginning of 2017, the pace of relocations has continued to increase. In March, a record number of people relocated was reached with 2 465 persons relocated. However, despite this positive progress, the current pace of relocation is still far below the targets set to ensure that all people eligible are relocated within the remaining time: the scheme is supposed to be finalised in September 2017.
73. Some countries, for example, Luxembourg and Portugal are steadily progressing on their obligations, some others (Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia) are relocating on a very limited basis. Austria has announced recently that it will start relocations soon but some other countries (Hungary and Poland) have not launched any action yet. So far only two member states (Malta and Finland) are well on track to meet their obligation for relocation from Greece and Italy. . To conclude, significantly increased commitment and delivery is still needed from other countries, in particular those which have not begun any relocations.
74. In my talks with the Greek authorities and other stakeholders involved in the relocation scheme, I tried to identify the real reasons for these unjustified delays. The repartition and allocation have been agreed between the States; but there is lack of political will to accomplish their own commitments. Other obstacles are put in place in order to prevent efficient relocation, and the criteria for eligibility are too difficult to meet.
75. I concluded that in the case of some countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Austria) there is no sufficient political will, however, in the case of more active countries, official commitment has to be matched with determined action by the competent national services. I was told that although the number of pledges is increasing, the security and bureaucratic procedures take a long time. The relocating countries usually have requirements concerning the profile of asylum seekers that they are willing to receive. Combined

⁷ See 11th Progress report on Relocation and Resettlement, Brussels, 12 April 2017, COM(2017) 212 final.

with strict criteria for eligibility (nationality, no application for asylum submitted in another country, no refusal) it makes it more difficult to identify the right person. Then security screening conducted by each national service unrelated to the screening already carried out by the Greek authorities takes a long time.

76. The situation is more complex in Italy, where very few people are eligible for relocation. If the criteria are not broadened, it is likely that very soon there will be no more eligible candidates. In this context, it is incomprehensible why relocation of unaccompanied minors remains a total failure. Up until now, not a single unaccompanied minor has been relocated from Italy.

4.2. Resettlement

77. In July 2015, the European Council adopted the resettlement scheme which was designed to provide safe and legal avenues to Europe for people in need of international protection. It was agreed to resettle 22 504 refugees from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. As of 7 February 2017, 13 968 people have been resettled. Resettlements have taken place to 21 resettling States.⁸ Out of these, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland and the Netherlands as well as associated countries Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Iceland have already fulfilled their pledges.

78. The EU-Turkey Statement stipulated that for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to the EU. It provided for the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme which was activated on 4 April 2016 once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU were substantially and sustainably reduced. The number of resettlements under this scheme has been included in the overall figure of settlements. In the ninth EC Progress Report on the EU's emergency relocation and resettlements scheme of 7 February 2015, it was assessed that the figure of resettlements under the EU-Turkey statement has continued to increase and member States were advancing well with the preparation of further resettlements operations. Since 4 April 2016, 3 098 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey to the EU under the 1:1 mechanism (one resettled for one returned). The Turkish authorities have been delivering on their commitment to step up efforts to provide larger lists of resettlement candidates.

5. Outstanding human rights concerns

79. Although, as demonstrated above, undeniable progress has been made in the reception conditions and processing of asylum requests in both front line countries, Greece and Italy since 2015 and early 2016, some challenges are still present and having an impact on the human rights situation of refugees and migrants, and they should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Concrete measures should be adopted by the European Union and Greek and Italian authorities' in order to improve the situation in some areas.

80. Improving reception conditions, particularly on the Greek islands, is a priority. Certainly, they have improved since 2016, but this does not mean that they are satisfactory. Some reception centres are still overcrowded, inadequate and insecure. The most sustainable solution to this problem would be to quickly process asylum claims and increase transfers to the mainland thus reducing the number of those who need to be accommodated on the islands.

81. On the mainland, sites that are clearly unsuitable for accommodation, in particular warehouses in the Central Macedonia region and Eliniko, and the remaining informal site in the Attica region, should be closed immediately and people should be transferred to adequate and safe reception conditions. The plans for building new camps that will host hundreds of migrants should be abandoned as big camps contribute to marginalisation. Smaller hosting facilities and greater geographical distribution should be adopted based on the Italian experience. National standards for hosting facilities should be adopted. Projects proposing use of renovated buildings, hotels and host families along the lines of the UNHCR plan should be supported.

82. The capacity for registration and processing of asylum claims should be increased particularly on the mainland where first instance decisions for those registered in the middle of 2016 will only be delivered in 2018. The UNHCR has also signalled some discriminatory practices which delay the procedures for some nationalities (for example Afghanis and Iraqis). The Greek Asylum System together with the EASO should urgently address this lack of capacity to fully process asylum claims within a reasonable timeframe for all nationalities.

⁸ Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

83. Reception conditions should also be improved in Italy and national standards should be established in order to eliminate serious discrepancies between different accommodation centres. The question of return of rejected claimants should be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to prevent the saturation of existing reception places which will soon reach their limit.

84. The issue of unaccompanied minors remains a most serious concern, in both Italy and Greece. Both girl and boy migrants are exposed to increased risks and have often suffered from violence, exploitation, trafficking in human beings, physical, psychological and sexual abuse during the journey and in the camps. They undergo an increased risk of being marginalised and drawn into criminal activities. Risks are multiplied when children share space with adults who are strangers to them in overcrowded facilities, not adapted to their specific needs.

85. The use of appropriate age assessment procedures is crucial for the protection of migrant children's rights. Unfortunately, in some countries they do not comply with standards and may be inaccurate to the detriment of minors. The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons is now working on guidelines for age assessment procedures, the recommendations of which will be submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly later this year.⁹

86. The question of relocation of unaccompanied minors is a total failure in both Italy and Greece. The Relocation Scheme should be adapted, as a matter of urgency, in order to enable minors to benefit from relocation. This is particularly urgent in Italy where, very soon, there will be no more eligible candidates for relocation.

87. There are over 21 000 unaccompanied minors registered in Italy and the percentage of children and young people among new arrivals is on a constant rise. Most of them are swiftly identified and registered as unaccompanied minors upon arrival but regrettably, many of them are transferred to inappropriate reception conditions due to the lack of specialised centres.

88. The situation may improve when a recently adopted law nr 47 on unaccompanied migrant minors (so called Legge Zampa) which entered into force in May 2017 is fully implemented. It provides for the establishment of specifically dedicated centres and appointment of 26 000 guardians. The decree on the implementation of the law is under preparation and hopefully it will be issued without undue delay.

89. There are 2 000 minors registered in Greece but only 1 352 live in shelters. 891 unaccompanied minors are on a waiting list including 130 in Reception centres and 18 in protective custody. The national capacity for accommodating unaccompanied children – despite undeniable improvements - is still far from meeting the needs. Greater effort should be made toward the creation of other types of alternative care e.g. care systems in host families including local and refugee families and supervised independent living for older children of 16-17 years of age in a smaller group care. What's more, special zones for minors and other vulnerable groups should be created in reception centres.

90. There have been reports of detention – in some circumstances – of unaccompanied minors in closed reception or police facilities, sometimes with adults. These situations are unacceptable. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has been engaged, since 2015, in the parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children in which it promotes and encourages legislative and organisational solutions for alternatives to detention for minors.

91. Finally, a general remark on the need to improve coordination structures with all humanitarian stakeholders active in Greece to ensure a coherent and efficient response and establish clear responsibilities. This would permit an exit from the current ad hoc response mode, as witnessed in the winterisation response, and encourage continued confidence from the donor community in the humanitarian response. Although the creation of the Ministry of Migration in 2016 was considered to be a step in the right direction, the lack of proper ministerial statute and structure undermines the progress. An action plan should be developed in case of possible mass arrivals.

⁹ See Introductory Memorandum on Age assessment procedures, Rapporteur: Ms Doris Fiala (Switzerland, ALDE).

6. Conclusions

92. More than a year since the adoption of the EU-Turkey statement, it has to be acknowledged that the agreement has delivered some positive results with regard to many challenges. Its main objective was to break the business model of smugglers exploiting refugees and migrants and putting their lives at fatal risk. The substantial decrease in both crossing and fatalities since the entry into force of the Statement addresses to some extent this concern. In the peak period in 2015, up to 5-6 000 people were crossing the Sea to the Greek islands daily. In the weeks before the implementation of the Statement the daily average was almost 2 000. By contrast, the average fell to under 100 daily since 1st January 2017. The number of fatalities which amounted to 37 between January and 10 May 2017 is also dramatically lower.

93. In consequence, the situation in Greece has largely improved and become manageable despite the fact that Greece has become a destination country where almost 100% arriving people request asylum. Reception, registration and asylum processing have become efficient– given continuous efforts of the authorities and other stakeholders to improve them – and raise less concern than before. However, they are by no means fully satisfactory and require further efforts and improvements.

94. A direct consequence of the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement (and of the closure of borders) was an overall decrease, (by 83%) in the number of new arrivals in the countries of the Western Balkan and Hungary: In terms of migrants stranded in these countries as of the end of 2016, the total number amounts to 13 533 as compared to 5 688 at the end of 2015. The majority of stranded migrants remain in Serbia (5 633) and Bulgaria (5 560).¹⁰

95. The implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the closure of the borders in the Western Balkan Route have had no impact on the number of people using the Central Mediterranean Route. Even if the number of arrivals to Italy has increased by approximately 30-40% in the first five months of 2017, this phenomenon is linked with the unstable situation in Libya and growing inflows of migrants from different African countries.

96. The reception conditions and asylum procedures in Italy, even if also improving, require urgent action. As with Greece, Italy has become a destination country and continuous mass arrivals risk saturating the country's reception capacities. The question of treatment of rejected asylum seekers should be given immediate consideration; the large number of irregular migrants creates threats for the whole asylum system and social stability.

97. The arrival of migrants to Italy is to a large extent dependent on the situation in Libya. While the level of save and rescue operations should be maintained, the European Union should increase its efforts to effectively combat smugglers' networks in the Mediterranean by targeting their supplies and by pooling intelligence between member States and relevant agencies.

98. Co-operation with the Libyan Coast Guards which already exists should be increased, and in particular funding for the training programmes, assistance in establishing a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and support in the provision of additional patrolling assets and their maintenance should be ensured.

99. There are undergoing contacts with the Libyan authorities to ensure that the conditions in centres for migrants are improved with a particular attention given to vulnerable persons and minors. Co-operation with UNHCR and IOM should be stepped up in this respect

100. On the other hand however, people will continue to undertake more diversified and dangerous journeys often relying on unscrupulous smugglers because of the lack of legal ways to Europe. The lack of accessible and safe pathways forces refugees and migrants to take enormous risks by trying to cross the sea.

101. The Assembly has already expressed itself on the idea of externalisation of hotspots.¹¹ It has called on the European member States and institutions to explore possibilities for better identifying people in need of international protection and organising external processing of asylum applications by means of safer procedures established outside Europe in safe third countries provided that the human rights of asylum seekers are safeguarded.

¹⁰ Source: Compilation of available data and information on mixed migration flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond, IOM.

¹¹ See Resolution [2147 \(2017\)](#) on "The need to reform European migration policies".

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102. The introduction or increase of other legal and safe pathways for migrants such as more elaborated resettlements, family reunification or humanitarian status would save the lives of many potential candidates for illegal crossing of the sea.

103. Much has been said about the need for enhanced co-operation and assistance to the countries of origin including not only financial support but also economic projects which would contribute to sustainable development and incite the people to stay in their own countries. Tackling the root-causes of the irregular migration across the Mediterranean is the most important and unavoidable long-term measure which has to be introduced as quickly as possible.