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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE  
EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL**

**Fourteenth report on relocation and resettlement**

# 1 Introduction

*The Fourteenth Report on Relocation and Resettlement outlines the urgent actions that still need to be taken to relocate in the coming months all those eligible from Italy and Greece as well as to meet the resettlement objectives.*

*June 2017 has witnessed a new record in terms of relocation. More than 2,000 people were relocated from Greece and almost 1,000 people from Italy. However, the pace of relocation in July is decreasing (with around 1,600 relocations from Greece and 600 from Italy). In total, more than 24,600 people have now been relocated as 24 July 2017 (16,803 from Greece and 7,873 from Italy).*

*The current relocation pace does not sufficiently alleviate the increased pressure on Italy. Since the beginning of the year more than 93,000 migrants have arrived on Italian shores. That is 6% more than in the same period of 2016. To address this emergency situation, the Commission put forward an Action Plan<sup>1</sup> to support Italy, to reduce pressure along the Central Mediterranean route, and increase solidarity. At the Informal Justice and Home Affairs Council on 6 July 2017, the Ministers welcomed this Action Plan. They reached a common understanding on the need to accelerate the collective work in implementing a series of priority actions and they, in particular, committed "to take all steps needed to guarantee that all those eligible from Italy are relocated".<sup>2</sup>*

*In Italy, there is still a significant number of migrants eligible for relocation. So far, arrivals of Eritreans, the main nationality eligible for relocation in Italy, have been rather moderate in 2017. However, over 5,200 Eritreans have arrived in Italy since the beginning of 2017, in addition to the 20,700 that arrived in 2016. As the current pace of relocation is still insufficient to relocate all those eligible, it is paramount that Member States now deliver on their commitments and legal obligations and significantly step up their relocation efforts from Italy.*

*As regards Greece, the good pace achieved in June should be sustained to be able to relocate all eligible applicants currently present in Greece as a priority by September 2017. As of 24 July, 27,295 people are registered for relocation and at least 4,800 people still need to be relocated. Member States should continue pledging and accelerating the response time and transfers to ensure that all eligible migrants are effectively relocated.*

*Steady progress in the implementation of the July 2015 Council Conclusions<sup>3</sup> to resettle 22,504 people continues, even though a number of Member States with large commitments have fulfilled them and are now focusing their efforts on resettlement under the EU-Turkey Statement. Member States that have not yet resettled or are far from reaching their target should immediately step up their efforts.*

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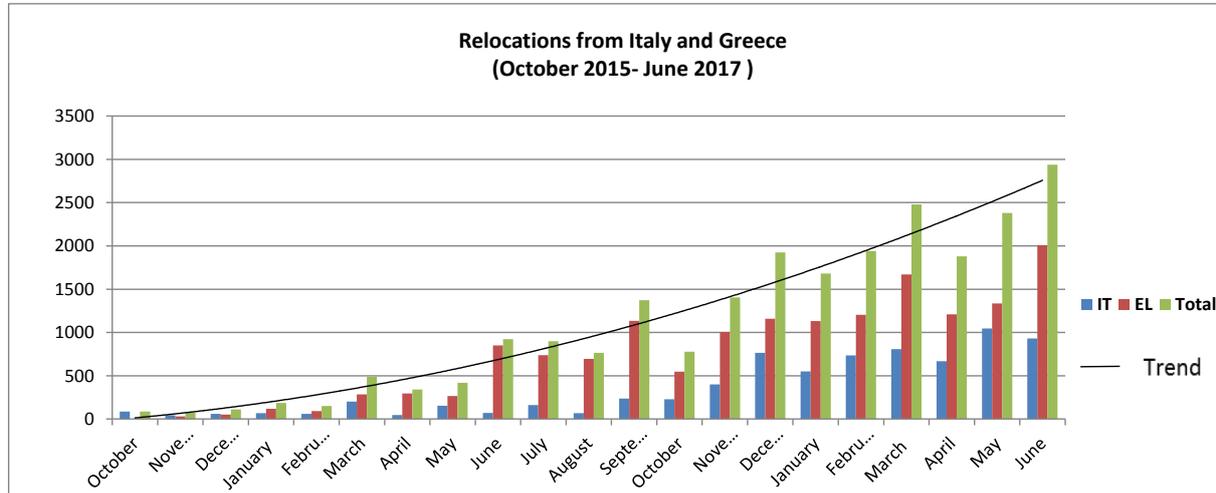
<sup>1</sup> SEC(2017) 339, adopted on 4 July.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eu2017.ee/news/press-releases/press-statement-following-discussions-central-mediterranean>

<sup>3</sup> <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11130-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

## 2 Relocation

The pace of relocation shows a continuous positive upward trend above 1000 relocations per month since November 2016. The majority of Member States is pledging and relocating on a regular basis. However, additional efforts from all Member States of relocation are needed to ensure relocation of all those eligible in Italy and Greece.



As some Member States have fulfilled their relocation obligations or are close to doing so, the successful implementation of the relocation programme requires that some Member States increase their pledges and that all Member States follow up on their obligations.

**Hungary and Poland** remain the only Member States that have not relocated a single person and Poland has not made any pledge since 16 December 2015. Moreover, the **Czech Republic** has not pledged since May 2016 and has not relocated anyone since August 2016. **These countries should start pledging and relocating immediately.**

**Austria** has also not relocated anyone yet but has recently made three pledges in May, June and July for 50 persons to be relocated from Italy. It is urgently expected that the first pledge will translate in effective relocations soon.

### 2.1 Greece: a significant acceleration in transfers in June but continuous efforts still needed to relocate all those eligible

As previously reported, Greece finalised the registration ("lodging of application for international protection") of all those who were covered by the pre-registration exercise, including those eligible for relocation. As of 24 July, in total 27,295 people have lodged their applications under the relocation scheme; 16,803 people have been already relocated while 4,804 still need to be relocated.<sup>4</sup> Although more applicants for relocation might still be registered before 26 September 2017 and some might be excluded from the relocation scheme, the total number of persons registered for relocation is expected to remain stable. In

<sup>4</sup> 2,622 candidates for relocation have been rejected by the Member States of relocation, were channelled to the Dublin procedure or to the national Greek procedure or, a very limited number, passed away; and 3, 066 registered applications were in the end not offered to the Member States by the Greek Asylum Service, because they were mostly transferred to Dublin procedures, or otherwise found to be ineligible, while some applications were not yet submitted to the Member States.

particular, between 1,500 and 2,000 persons who have been initially channelled to the Dublin procedure may fall back into relocation, bringing the total potential of people still to be relocated to around 6,800. For this reason, it is crucial that Member States continue pledging on a monthly basis.

*The pace of relocation: need to accelerate the response time, increase reception capacities and implement the planning exercise effectively*

As previously reported, **Malta** has already relocated its full allocation.<sup>5</sup> In this reporting period **Latvia** has also relocated its full allocation, but one person and **Norway** fulfilled its commitment. With the relocation transfers implemented and planned for July and August, **Finland, Lithuania and Luxembourg** will have relocated more than 80% of their allocation, and **Sweden**, who only started relocation in June will have relocated almost 60% of its allocation.

The Commission welcomes the announced increase in monthly pledges by **Spain**. Despite announcing its intention to start relocating from Greece, **Austria** is yet to officially pledge.

In June, **the pace of relocation** reached 2,000 transfers, the highest number in a single month so far. This was the result of the coordinated efforts by all stakeholders as per the planning documents agreed; from the Greek Asylum Service increasing the notification pace; to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) ensuring the transportation from different parts of Greece to Athens and the accommodation therein; to the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) supporting in the preparation and follow up of the files; to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) organising the health checks, pre-departure information sessions and the flights; and to Member States of relocation showing flexibility particularly when cases had to be postponed for health reasons.

However, despite the planning agreed with the Member States, it was not possible to sustain the pace and it is foreseen that only around 1,600 people will be relocated in July, mainly because of:

- The long response time by some Member States of relocation and limited processing capacity: some countries (in particular **Estonia and Switzerland**) have accumulated more than a three-month delay in replies to some cases. At times these delays are due to lack of adequate capacity in the Member State of relocation to process relocation requests at the same pace as the monthly pledges, particularly to carry out checks by national security services. Other times, it is due to the length of national procedures in the Member State of relocation. Some countries carrying out resettlement and relocation at the same time have also experienced limitations in the processing capacity;
- Reception capacity limitations: although **Ireland, Finland and Portugal** have worked towards solving their difficulties, of these three Member States only Finland has been able to sustain the necessary regular pace of transfers.

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<sup>5</sup> Excluding the specific allocation under the remaining 54,000.

These difficulties to relocate are putting under strain the Greek reception system in the mainland, which is subject to increasing pressure due to the number of relocation applicants still present in the country and regular asylum applicants, including those transferred from the islands to undergo the regular asylum procedure.

For the effective implementation of the relocation scheme, **all Member States should show a constructive spirit at each step of the relocation procedure**. The Commission stands ready to facilitate this process.

#### *Unaccompanied minors: good progress continues*

As of 21 July, 390 unaccompanied minors have been relocated out of the 581 unaccompanied minors eligible for relocation. The same Member States (**Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain**) continue offering places for this category of vulnerable applicants, and the Commission welcomes this. However, it is crucial that all **Member States** accept relocation requests for this particularly vulnerable group. **Member States are encouraged to continue providing places as needed<sup>6</sup> to relocate the registered separated minors.**

It is the Best Interests of Child Assessment that determines first, if the minor should be relocated, and second to which Member State. Over-restrictive policies with regard to the proof of family links, such as those of Germany, pose an excessive burden on the Greek authorities, even more so when no such requirement is included in the Council Decisions on relocation.

#### **Urgent actions needed:**

- **All Member States should continue pledging on a monthly basis at least at current levels** to ensure a sufficiently large pool of places to enable a swift relocation as soon as a person is identified as eligible for relocation and registered according to the agreed procedures and practices.
- **In this final stage of implementation all Member States should further increase their efforts** to ensure smooth running of the process, avoid delays in the transfer procedure and, when needed, work towards solving any logistic bottlenecks that may arise.
- **Austria** should follow up on its announcement and start pledging and relocating from Greece immediately.
- **Countries with delays in providing final replies** (in particular **Estonia and Switzerland**) should respect the deadlines agreed in the relocation protocol. **Germany** should also show flexibility regarding the proof of family links.
- **Ireland and Portugal** should take urgent measures to increase reception capacity and enable the relocation of all pending cases by September 2017.

#### **2.2 Italy: increased efforts needed from all stakeholders to answer the current migratory pressure**

While in May and June the pace of relocations from Italy has stabilised at 1,000 a month, in July the number decreased again. It is foreseen that only up to 600 applicants should be

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<sup>6</sup> Although, in principle, no additional pledges are needed, the need for further pledges may increase if some of the Dublin requests for unaccompanied minors sent to other Member States are rejected.

relocated this month. Given the current overall pressure on Italy's migration infrastructure, it is necessary to build on the positive trend of recent months and further accelerate the pace of relocations from Italy. The Commission's Action Plan for Italy includes the measures which, in the Commission's opinion, need to be urgently adopted to deliver in full on existing relocation obligations.

*Identification, registration and centralisation of applicants: recent progress to be accelerated further*

It is of utmost importance that Italy urgently identifies and registers for relocation all eligible applicants that arrived in Italy during 2016 and in the first half of 2017. While Italy has registered so far around 10,000 persons for relocation (out of which 7,873 have already been relocated) and an additional 2,500 are in the pipeline to be registered, in 2016 alone over 20,700 Eritreans arrived in Italy and more than 5,200 have so far arrived in 2017.

As indicated in the Action Plan, EASO is ready to support Italy in its registration and processing efforts. To this end, EASO has started a social media campaign in particular by creating an EASO relocation hotline, which is now receiving up to 200 calls a week. However, for the information campaign to be successful it is important that Italy provides, without delay, the necessary information to EASO for the wider distribution of leaflets and banners and raises awareness about the relocation scheme in the local Prefecture/Questure and in the reception centres including by ensuring that potential candidates who are currently outside Italy's formal reception system are also swiftly registered and included in the relocation scheme. Furthermore, EASO is ready to increase the number and active presence of its mobile teams to reach out to all potential eligible applicants who have not been yet registered and facilitate their registration into the relocation scheme.

To facilitate an increased pace in the registration for relocation of new arrivals and improve the efficiency of the procedure, it is also essential that **Italy centralises eligible applicants in a few dedicated relocation hubs**. To this end, the Commission welcomes the recent steps taken, particularly the transfer of eligible applicants to centres in Rome for the last stages of the relocation procedure and the *Circolare* of the Interior Ministry calling for the centralisation of eligible applicants in few centres. These measures should now be fully implemented and further increased, both for newly arriving eligible applicants as well as for those already accommodated all over Italy. To support these measures, the Commission has recently awarded emergency assistance to Italy under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of EUR 15.33 million for the provision of accommodation, food, health care and linguistic and cultural mediation in three dedicated relocation hubs.

*The pace of relocation: better progress to be achieved*

After a positive trend, the number of **pledges** in June and July decreased. **Luxembourg** and **France** have not pledged for Italy for more than three months. On the other side, the Commission welcomes the recent pledge made by **Slovakia**, which should now translate, without delay, into effective relocations. The Commission also welcomes the announced increase in the monthly pledges by **Spain** and the announced acceleration in the pace of transfers by **Germany**. As mentioned before, pledging is essential to provide a sufficient pool of places that will allow Italy to react quickly in the face of increasing arrivals of eligible applicants and to provide for swift relocations. This will also contribute to avoiding possible irregular movements of those applicants.

For the scheme to work properly, it is also essential that Member States follow the deadlines agreed in the relocation protocol, especially the 10 day deadline to **reply on relocation requests submitted**. In this respect **Belgium, Germany, France and Luxembourg** continue accumulating delays with some relocation requests pending since last year. Member States should also closely coordinate with Italy when there are doubts on the applicants' nationality. Some Member States continue applying undue restrictive **preferences** (e.g., **France** only accepts families/single women with children of Eritrean nationality) which are almost impossible for Italy to meet. **Advanced planning** for Member States with large monthly pledges, following the Swedish model, would also help accelerating relocation, as seen in the case of Greece. Member States should demonstrate flexibility for the logistics around transfers and when agreeing flight dates.

The Commission welcomes the bilateral arrangements reached between **Italy and Austria and Lithuania** concerning additional security interviews. The Commission now expects the relocation to be implemented swiftly by Austria and welcomes the relocation of the first 10 applicants to Lithuania. Additionally, the Commission expects that, following the invitation made by Italy, similar bilateral arrangements should be concluded with **Estonia, Ireland and any other Member State concerned** and that relocation to those Member States will start immediately.

#### *Relocation of unaccompanied minors started but more efforts still needed*

Although only one additional unaccompanied minor was transferred in the reporting period, progress has been made concerning the procedure to enable the relocation of this category of vulnerable applicants. 10 new cases are in the pipeline awaiting transfer still by the end of July, while another 25 cases are awaiting approval and other 38 requests are ready to be sent. Some additional cases are under examination.

The active involvement of public authorities both at central as well as at local level has been crucial for this progress. In particular, the Italian Ministry of Justice addressed a note on relocation and Dublin procedures to the courts. Further clarifications are expected to be circulated in the short term. In addition, the Ministry of Labour is supporting the process by making available information on eligible minors in reception centres. The Commission's team in Italy is promoting coordination at central administrative level, while EASO and IOM are also playing an essential role in providing information and technical assistance.

Eritrean unaccompanied minors register the second highest rate of absconding. In order to offer all eligible unaccompanied minors the possibility of a safe transfer to another Member State through relocation, local authorities should channel all eligible unaccompanied minors to fewer dedicated facilities.

At the same time, it is crucial that Member States treat requests about vulnerable cases and unaccompanied minors as a matter of priority. Preference policies, such as those of **Germany**, that require the unaccompanied minor to have links with the Member State of relocation that are not in line with the Council Decision should be avoided. Rejections can only be based on the grounds foreseen in the Council Decisions.

If not done yet, Member States should share with Italian authorities the information on the reception and asylum infrastructure foreseen for those unaccompanied minors to be relocated.

### **Urgent actions needed:**

- **Italy** should accelerate, as a matter of priority, the registration of eligible applicants for relocation, facilitate the implementation of EASO's information campaign and continue in its efforts to centralise the relocation procedure.
- **All Member States** should further increase their pledges and pledge on a monthly basis, accept the applicants Italy proposes for relocation more swiftly, increase their capacity to process application requests, respond more quickly to Italian requests, avoid overly restrictive preferences and limit requirements causing delays in the transfer procedure. **Furthermore, Member States with large allocations** should provide advanced planning and show flexibility concerning the logistics around transfers.
- **Luxembourg** and **France** should start pledging again.
- **Belgium, Germany, France and Luxembourg** should reply to pending relocation requests and respect the deadlines agreed in the relocation protocol.
- Member states should give priority to applications concerning **vulnerable applicants**, in particular **unaccompanied minors** and continue making available places for them in their pledges.

### **3 Resettlement**

As several States with large quotas have fulfilled their resettlement commitment under the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 or are very close to fulfilling them, most efforts are now being directed towards implementing the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. Nevertheless, progress continues to be observed in the implementation of the Conclusions, with over three quarters of the 22,504 resettlements agreed already completed. Since 9 June 2017, 760 people have been resettled under the scheme. Most resettlements are now taking place from Turkey, even though resettlement from other countries, mainly Jordan and Lebanon, still continues.

As of 24 July 2017, 17,179 people have been resettled to 22 States (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Seven Member States (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) as well as three Associated Countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) have already fulfilled their pledges. While a larger number of Member States is resettling than in previous years, nine Member States have not resettled under this scheme yet.<sup>7</sup> Member States with large gaps between their commitments and actual implementation are unlikely to fulfil their remaining commitments.

The implementation of the Conclusions of 20 July 2015 includes efforts from Member States to resettle Syrians from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement. Since 4 April 2016, 7,806 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey under the resettlement part of the EU-Turkey Statement. Since the last reporting period 1,552 Syrians have been resettled under this mechanism and the remaining number of all pledges now stands at 21,522. Resettlement under the EU-Turkey Statement has so far taken place to Austria, Belgium, Estonia, France,

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<sup>7</sup> This group of Member States includes Romania, even though Romania has now started resettling Syrians from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement.

Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Finland and Sweden. Additionally, Norway has so far resettled 601 Syrians from Turkey since 4 April 2016.

The Member States resettling under the EU-Turkey Statement are preparing further operations, including missions to Turkey to interview resettlement candidates. Following recommendations made in previous reports, Bulgaria has now informed that it is ready to proceed with resettling 40 Syrians. The EU Delegation in Ankara continues to underline to UNHCR the importance of sending new submissions of candidates also to Member States with smaller pledges.

Among the Member States who have not yet resettled from Turkey,<sup>8</sup> Malta conducted its selection mission to Turkey in July and Cyprus has formally approached UNHCR expressing its readiness to resettle 5 persons under the EU-Turkey Statement. The Czech Republic returned the files it received from UNHCR last summer since it does not seem to be planning any resettlements from Turkey for now.

In parallel to the implementation of the current resettlement commitments from Turkey, the negotiations on the Standard Operating Procedures for the **Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme** with the Participating States and with Turkey are progressing, and the objective is to have them agreed as soon as possible.

In order to ensure continuous EU funding support for resettlement, the Commission at the 8<sup>th</sup> Resettlement and Relocation Forum on 4 July invited Member States to submit by 15 September 2017 **new resettlement pledges** covering the year 2018. This funding exercise is part of the regular pledging which enables Member States to benefit from the EU funding support to their resettlement efforts. It represents the continuation of a coordinated EU-level approach to resettlement and builds towards the future Union Resettlement Framework. Resettlement of Syrians and other third country nationals displaced by the conflict in Syria from Turkey remains the main priority. At the same time given other humanitarian, protection, and migration management considerations, Member States are further invited to resettle people in need of international protection from Lebanon and Jordan as well as North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

In line with the Action Plan of 4 July and with a view to saving lives, reducing migratory pressure on Libya, and providing alternatives to irregular onward movements towards the EU, Member States were specifically invited to focus on at least limited resettlement of the most vulnerable people from Libya, Egypt, Niger, Ethiopia and Sudan. For the time being, the total amount earmarked for resettlement in 2018 is EUR 377.5 million which can support the resettlement of at least 37,750 people in need of international protection.

**Recommendations:**

- Member States which have not yet resettled under the ongoing EU level schemes (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and those who have not reported any progress and are still far away from reaching their targets (the Czech Republic, Denmark) should immediately step up their efforts to reach their

<sup>8</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

commitments under the Council Conclusions of 20 July 2015.

- Member States are invited to further increase their overall efforts demonstrated over the past two years and submit to the Commission by 15 September 2017 **ambitious** pledges for resettlement in 2018.

## 4 Way forward

As reiterated by the European Heads of State or Government at the 22-23 June 2017 European Council and most recently by the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers at their informal meeting in Tallinn on 6 July, full implementation of the current emergency relocation scheme remains a priority, especially in view of the current situation in the Central Mediterranean.

Given the current numbers of migrants in Greece and Italy, relocation of all those currently present in Italy and Greece, that are eligible, is possible and feasible by September 2017. This remains our common goal to which all Member States should contribute fairly and proportionally. The recent faster pace of relocations shows that solidarity works if all Member States, including Greece, Italy, EU agencies and the other stakeholders on the ground work closely together to achieve the same goal in a spirit of sincere cooperation. Member States should therefore urgently deploy the additional efforts and necessary actions indicated in this report to meet this objective. The Commission will continue assisting Member States in coordinating these intensified efforts.

The Council Decisions apply to all eligible applicants arriving in the territory of Italy and Greece until 26 September 2017. Therefore, persons who arrived up to that date and meet all the requirements in the Council Decisions, are eligible for relocation and should be transferred to other Member States within a reasonable period of time thereafter. It is crucial that Member States accelerate relocations from both Italy and Greece in order to avoid a backlog in this final phase and keep providing enough pledges to create a sufficiently large pool of places for relocating all eligible applicants still present in both countries, including those who are likely to arrive until the target dates of the Council Decisions on relocation. After 26 September 2017, Italy and Greece should be able to send relocation requests for the remaining eligible applicants to the Member States that have not yet used in full their allocation. The Commission will continue providing the financial support as established in the Council Decisions.

The Commission counts on all the Member States to ensure the relocation of all eligible applicants.

Indeed, over the last months, the Commission has repeatedly reminded all Member States of their legal obligations under the Council Decisions and called on those Member States that have yet to pledge and relocate from Greece and Italy, to do so immediately. Regrettably, despite repeated calls, Hungary and Poland have still not relocated a single person and the Czech Republic has relocated only a few and has not pledged for over a year. The Commission therefore decided on 14 June 2017 to initiate infringement procedures against these three Member States. Following their replies to the letters of formal notice and in the absence of any action, the Commission has decided on 26 July 2017 to adopt, as the next step, reasoned opinions.

In parallel, Member States should also step up efforts to deliver on their resettlement commitments, in particular those which have not yet resettled anyone as well as those which are still well below their set target.

While all stakeholders should focus on the full implementation of the current emergency relocation and resettlement schemes, in parallel, in line with the conclusions of the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs ministers on 6 July, there is a need to continue to work with the utmost priority on the package of legislative proposals for the reform of the Common European Asylum System, including a reform of the Dublin Regulation based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility.