

# European Agenda on Migration: Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos on consolidating the progress made

Dear all,

Today we present the consolidated progress that we have been making in managing migration on all fronts. The total number of arrivals along the main migratory routes has gone down by 63% compared to last year, and we are trying to gradually exit the crisis mode.

This does not mean that we should become complacent or that our work is over. The fact that migration flows have gone down should not make us forget that migrants are stranded in a terrible situation in Libya.

I fully share the concerns that are being documented about Libya. This is precisely why the EU is acting on all fronts. Our main priority is and remains to save lives and ensure the human and dignified treatment of all migrants, regardless of their status.

Right now, thousands of migrants in Libya are being provided with medical assistance and basic support by international organisations such as IOM and UNHCR, thanks to our €90 million under the EU Africa Trust Fund.

At the same time, we are working with Libya and neighbouring countries to avoid that migrants are stranded in Libya in the first place. To those persons who are in need of protection, we want to offer support and help to get resettled. I welcome the fact that the first group of 25 of the most vulnerable persons needing protection were evacuated from Libya to Niger last weekend, awaiting their further resettlement.

Now that the flows have gone down, we must all urgently invest more in legal pathways. This is why I am pleased to have received more than 34,400 resettlement pledges in response to my call last month from many Member States, and I urge the others to follow soon.

On top of this commitment, over 25,700 persons have been resettled to the EU since 2015. At the same time, to those who don't need protection, we want to offer help to return home, particularly if they are stranded in Libya.

So far, over 15,000 migrants, including over 10,000 from Libya, have already benefitted from assisted voluntary return, thanks to our support and in cooperation with IOM.

Projects are in development to step up the work with Libya's neighbours to help more migrants return home from Libya, in a safe and orderly way. We also want to further crack down on the criminal groups that exploit the vulnerability of these desperate people.

For example, we already have clear results through our cooperation and support to Niger: over 100 suspected traffickers and smugglers have been arrested already in the first half of 2017.

We now want to expand this model to other countries. Apart from all our political and operational efforts, our financial commitments must continue too.

Two years after its launch, the EU Trust Fund for Africa is supporting economic development and migration management in countries facing crises of different natures, with programmes worth almost €2 billion having been approved so far.

In Turkey, the EU is well on track to contract the €3 billion under the Facility for Refugees by the end of 2017. One million of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees are now receiving monthly electronic cash transfers and almost two million will soon be able to benefit from healthcare.

Through all our actions, it is very clear: Europe is not a fortress and we remain a safe haven for those in need of protection. But to ensure that we can continue to live up to our standards, we can only provide protection to those who need it. Those who have no right to stay must be returned. Return rates at EU level however remain unsatisfactory still, in particular also under the EU-Turkey Statement.

This brings me to another example where we cannot become complacent: Greece. I take this opportunity to express our deep condolences for the tragic losses in West Attica due to the floods caused by the extreme weather conditions. Our thoughts are with families of the victims and of course with all those people who are still battling an uneven fight against this unprecedented natural and human disaster.

Right now, at the same time, Greece is facing another situation of severe overcrowding on most of the islands. But we cannot have a repetition of last year. The EU is supporting Greece financially and operationally to expand adequate reception capacity on the islands.

Greece should also speed up its asylum and return procedures, and further cooperate with local authorities to expand reception facilities. The European Commission is offering and will continue to offer its full support.

Finally, I want to say a word on relocation. Member States have continued showing solidarity towards Italy and Greece with over 31,500 persons relocated so far. Right now, around 800 eligible persons in Greece and 3,000 in Italy are left to be relocated, and we urge Member States to fulfil their legal obligations as soon as possible.

As I have said before, this solidarity cannot stop and should continue beyond the current schemes.

Now that the situation is gradually more stable, the time has come to move forward and structurally improve our migration and asylum systems, for the future. The comprehensive reform of our asylum system and Dublin are

essential.

I also welcome Member States' willingness to engage with us on developing specific labour migration pilot projects with key countries.

If anything is clear, it is that we are not closing our doors. But we want well-managed, orderly, safe and fair migration.

Thank you.

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## [EU report: Evaluation of Ukrainian reforms shows considerable progress but need to accelerate implementation to reap full benefits](#)

Progress in other areas has been less forthcoming, with accelerated implementation needed to bring about real change for the Ukrainian people.

*"Since last year's report, we have seen a number of long-awaited achievements. Our Association Agreement entered into force, and Ukrainian citizens were granted visa-free travel for short stay visits to the Schengen area. We now expect the implementation of reforms to be accelerated so that Ukrainian citizens can fully reap the benefits of our partnership. Ukraine can count on the European Union's continued support in order to make this possible",* said the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**.

*"We remain convinced of the fundamental commitment of the Ukrainian President, government and Rada to deep-seated reform of the country. Of course this has not been a straightforward process: corruption is deep-rooted and there are vested interests that need to be overcome; naturally there are setbacks along the way that we must contend with. We are at times critical, and we insist on certain conditions, yet we are aware of how much Ukraine has already changed, with much more having been achieved in the past three years than in the decades before that, and under very challenging circumstances. The European Union will stick with Ukraine",* said the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**.

This 2nd Joint Association Implementation Report on Ukraine, which has been published ahead of the EU-Ukraine Association Council on 8 December 2017, sets out the state of play of Ukraine's commitment under the Association Agreement since the last meeting of the Association Council in December 2016. It focuses on key developments and reforms undertaken in line with the strategic priorities agreed between the EU and Ukraine.

In the course of 2017, mechanisms for policy coordination, steering and monitoring of the implementation of the Association Agreement were being set up by the government, which led to uneven progress of implementation in various sectoral areas. The report stresses the urgent need to streamline various reform tracks in Ukraine and accelerate the pace of implementation in 2018.

The report outlines that Ukraine has pursued the implementation of structural reforms, generating positive trends in the economic and social spheres despite internal and external challenges. The year 2017 also witnessed important legislative developments in areas such as the electricity market, energy efficiency, environment, education and decentralisation. Furthermore, key reforms such as pensions, healthcare and food safety were initiated. Justice sector reform continued with the adoption of a new law on the Constitutional Court and the setting up of the new Supreme Court. The implementation of the Strategy on Public Administration Reform has advanced and the reforming of law enforcement bodies continues.

The report emphasises that Ukraine has continued to advance measures to tackle corruption, but that further steps need to be taken in order for these measures to have tangible benefits. The electronic declarations of assets submitted nearly a year ago by high-level public figures and officials, for example, have yet to be analysed. The number of convictions when it comes to high-profile cases of alleged corruption also remains low; the rapid establishment of an anti-corruption court, in line with the recommendation of the Venice Commission, would be essential in this regard.

The report acknowledges the continued, resolute policy actions taken by the Ukrainian authorities, supported by international partners, which resulted in a consolidated stabilisation of the economy. As a result, in September 2017, after four years, Ukraine returned to the international capital markets raising over €2.5 billion (\$3 billion) with a 15-year maturity. Thanks to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, Ukrainian and EU businesses have received stable, preferential market access. Ukraine's overall trade with the EU increased by 28.4% in the period January–July 2017 compared to the same period in 2016.

The European Union continues to fully support Ukraine's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty. We condemn and do not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. The European Union also continues to support the diplomatic efforts to find a lasting peaceful solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine through the complete implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

**More information:**

[Full Joint Report](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Ukraine relations](#)

[Website of the European Union Delegation in Ukraine](#)

[EU-Ukraine Summit webpage \(12-13 July 2017\)](#)

[European Commission Support Group for Ukraine website](#)

[EU-Ukraine Trade relations website](#)

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