



# THE EU AND

# → THE MIGRATION CRISIS

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Throughout history, people have migrated from one place to another. People try to reach European shores for different reasons and through different channels. They look for legal ways, but they also risk their lives, to escape from political oppression, war and poverty, as well as to reunite with family and benefit from entrepreneurship and education.

In 2015 and 2016 the EU experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. More than 1 million people arrived in the European Union, most of them fleeing from war and terror in Syria and other countries.

The EU has agreed on a range of measures to deal with the crisis. These include trying to resolve the root causes of the crisis as well as greatly increasing aid to people in need of humanitarian assistance both inside and outside the EU. Steps are being taken to relocate asylum seekers already in Europe, resettle people in need from neighbouring countries and return people who do not qualify for asylum. The EU is improving security at borders, tackling migrant smuggling and offering safe ways for people to legally enter the EU.



# WHAT IS THE MIGRATION CRISIS?

Many people in need of international protection are coming to the EU to seek asylum. Protection is given to people fleeing their home countries who cannot return due to a well-founded fear of persecution or risk of suffering serious harm. The EU has a legal and moral obligation to protect those in need. EU Member States are responsible for examining asylum applications and for deciding who will receive protection.

In particular, the Commission is continuously working to make sure that adequate child protection measures are taken. This has become an increasingly urgent issue as the number of **children in migration**, particularly those who are unaccompanied, is growing. These children are extremely vulnerable and require special attention.

But not everyone who comes to Europe needs protection. Many people leave their homes in an attempt to improve their lives. These people are often referred to as economic migrants, and if they

do not have a legitimate claim to protection, then national governments have an obligation to ensure that they return (either voluntarily or with use of coercive measures) to their home country, or to another country through which they have passed.

Thousands of people have died at sea attempting to reach the EU. Almost 90 % of refugees and migrants have paid organised criminals and people smugglers to get them across borders.

Providing people with food, water and shelter puts an enormous strain on the resources of some EU countries. This is especially the case in Greece and Italy where the vast majority of refugees and migrants first arrive in the EU.

In a large part of the EU — called the **Schengen area** — people are able to move freely without internal border controls, but the flow of migrants has caused some EU countries to reintroduce temporary checks at their borders with other Schengen states.

## WHAT THE EU IS DOING

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past 2 years, European migration

policy has advanced in leaps and bounds as the **European Agenda on Migration** proposed by the European Commission in May 2015 is implemented.

### Delivering a European response to the test of our generation

#### OUTSIDE THE EU



assist refugees where they are worldwide



resettle refugees to the EU



address the root causes of irregular migration with origin and transit countries

#### AT THE EU'S BORDERS



tripled EU presence at sea, to save lives and dismantle trafficking networks



better manage our external borders



create 'hotspots' in Greece and Italy



identify and register every arrival  
(1) asylum procedures  
(2) return and readmission procedures

#### INSIDE THE EU



relocate refugees to other EU Member States



simplify and harmonise our asylum system

## → Saving lives

The EU has increased its capacity to carry out search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and to tackle criminal networks. By tripling the available resources, it helped save over 400 000 lives in 2015 and 2016. Over 2 000 traffickers and smugglers were caught and 375 vessels removed.

## → Tackling the root causes of migration

The EU is working with five key countries of origin and transit in Africa (Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal). For example, the EU's cooperation with Niger is helping to reduce the transit flow through the Sahara, with EU funding supporting self-employment in transit zones and six migrant centres for vulnerable migrants as well as hands-on EU support on the ground helping to tackle smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

## → Reducing flows

The EU–Turkey Statement of March 2016 aims to stop the uncontrolled flow of migrants across the Aegean Sea. It also provides legal ways for refugees to enter Europe. The numbers of refugees and migrants coming from Turkey have been significantly reduced as a result. From a high of 10 000 in a single day in October 2015, arrivals to Greece have averaged less than 74 a day since March 2016.

The EU and Turkey agreed that irregular migrants arriving on the Greek islands from Turkey who do not apply for asylum or whose application has not been accepted may

be returned to Turkey. For every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands after an irregular crossing, the EU will take in a Syrian from Turkey who has not sought to make this journey in an irregular way. By 21 July 2017, 7 807 Syrian refugees had been resettled from Turkey to the EU under this provision.

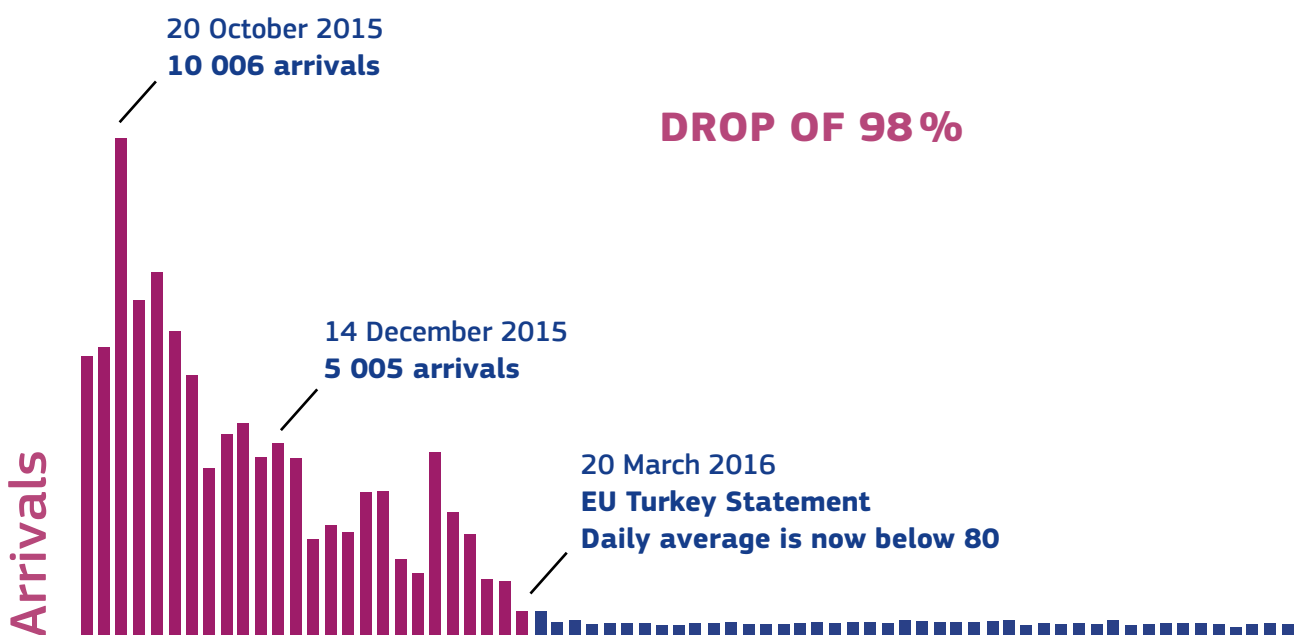
The EU has provided support to Greece and Italy for the establishment of so-called hotspots to help the authorities in these countries better manage the incoming migration flows. In this context, it has also sent Member State experts to help screen, identify and register people arriving and to inform them about their right to apply for international protection.

The EU has increased the rate of returns of irregular migrants with no right to stay in the EU to their home country. Member States have agreed to apply the rules on return more actively and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) will assist them by coordinating return flights. The EU is also supporting Member States by concluding return arrangements with relevant non-EU countries.

## → Protecting our borders

The new **European Border and Coast Guard** was launched in October 2016 to ensure that Europe can protect its common external borders and face the new migration and security challenges together. More than 1 550 officers have been deployed to support Member States at the external borders, in addition to the existing 100 000 border guards in the Member States.

### Daily crossings from Turkey to Greece





Testimonies from people who have benefited from relocation.

## ➔ Opening safe pathways

An emergency relocation scheme was set up in 2015, with EU Member States committing to relocate people from Greece and Italy to other EU countries. By 21 July 2017, more than 24 000 people had been relocated — 16 774 from Greece and 2 675 from Italy — to 24 participating states. Member States should be able to relocate all those eligible by the end of 2017.

The EU also wants to create safe and legal ways for asylum seekers and refugees to enter the EU so that they do not have to risk their lives by turning to smugglers and traffickers. A **voluntary resettlement programme** agreed by Member States envisages that 22 500 people will be transferred from outside the EU. By July 2017, some 16 500 people had been resettled to 21 resettling states.

## ➔ Showing solidarity at home and abroad

In total, €17.7 billion has been allocated from the EU budget to deal with the migration crisis in the 2015-2017 period, with €10.3 billion for planned funding outside the EU, including €2.7 billion in humanitarian aid, €0.6 billion for the Trust Fund for Syria (also known as the MADAD Fund) and €2.4 billion for the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

The **humanitarian aid** provided by the EU helps refugees and migrants in countries outside the EU, such as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In order to support a Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the EU and its Member States have already allocated €2.2 billion for both humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance. As of June 2017, contracts had been signed for 48 projects worth over €1.6 billion, with €811 million having already been disbursed.

The EU is also a leading donor in the international response to the Syria crisis, with €9.4 billion in humanitarian and development assistance already allocated.

An interactive version of this publication, containing links to online content, is available in PDF and HTML format at <http://publications.europa.eu/webpub/com/factsheets/migration-crisis/en/>

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