

SAFE PASSAGE

Fair Sharing of Responsibility for Refugee Reception among EU Member States: Relocation

What is relocation?

Relocation is the transfer of persons in clear need of international protection from Greece and Italy to another EU Member State.

An intra-EU solidarity tool, relocation was adopted in 2015 as a temporary and exceptional mechanism to partially relieve frontline Member States from the increased migratory pressure on their territory.

Who participates in the scheme and who benefits from it?

All EU Member States are bound by the decision, with the exception of Denmark, the UK and Ireland. The latter nonetheless agreed to participate in the scheme. Austria and Hungary have not made any relocation places available, while Poland, despite having pledged some places, has not yet relocated a single asylum seeker.

The beneficiaries of the relocation mechanism are asylum seekers who applied for asylum in Italy or Greece and of a nationality with an EU average recognition rate of above 75% (which means that in average, across all EU countries, they have a 75% chance of receiving a positive decision on their asylum application). The list of nationalities is revised every quarter, and currently, the nationalities eligible are Syria, Eritrea, Burundi, Mozambique, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar, and Yemen.

Why relocation?

Solidarity and fair-sharing of responsibility are governing principles of the EU, codified in article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Following an increase in refugees' arrivals to Greece and Italy in 2015, the European Commission proposed the relocation of asylum seekers as a solidarity mechanism to respond to an unprecedented situation strongly affecting two Member States.

Two proposals were adopted: the first one, in May 2015, provided for the relocation of 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece, whereas a second one, in September 2015, called for the additional relocation of 120,000 people from Italy, Greece and Hungary. Hungary however refused to be included in the proposal and to be considered a 'frontline state', thus leaving its 54,000 quota empty.

Currently, EU Member States are called upon to relocate 66,400 asylum seekers from Greece and 39,600 from Italy over two years (until September 2017).

What is the current status?

Information on relocation is available [at this link](#) and is updated regularly. At the end of February 2017, almost a year and a half after the entry into force of the relocation decisions, only 13,264 people have been relocated from Greece and Italy. That amounts to little over 10% of the total number of people to be relocated.

The slow pace of relocation, the unwillingness of some Member States to cooperate and the small number of places made available calls into question the efficiency of this intra-EU solidarity mechanism.

How does relocation work?

Every country is assigned a number of relocation places based on a mandatory distribution key elaborated by the European Commission which takes into account population size, Gross Domestic Product, number of asylum applications in the past years and unemployment rate.

Countries participating in the scheme then pledge a certain number of places for Italy and Greece, to be filled within a determinate period of time. On the ground in frontline countries, teams present in the 'hotspots' and constituted of, among others, national experts, officers from the relocating countries and EASO (European Asylum Support Office) officials, are in charge of informing, identifying and selecting potential relocation candidates.

Once candidates are identified and places made available, a matching exercise takes place, taking into account as much as possible family links, languages spoken and any other cultural or social ties to a specific EU country. Priority is given to vulnerable applicants (for example, minors and unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, etc.).

Countries which relocate receive 6,000€ per individual relocated, while relocating countries (Italy and Greece) receive 500€ as a contribution to travel costs. Once relocated, the asylum application and entire asylum process of each individual takes place in the country of relocation.

Are asylum seekers preferences taken into account?

No. Asylum seekers have no right to decide the country where they will be relocated, though family links, language skills and other cultural and social ties to a specific country can be taken into account. However, there is no guarantee that a person currently in Greece or Italy with relatives in another EU country will be able to join them through relocation.

Why should asylum seekers' preferences be taken into account?

Taking into account the preferences of asylum seekers, and their ties to a specific country, would greatly enhance their integration prospects into European societies. Being able to rely, for example, on family members, or on a community already present in a country, is a strong incentive for people to remain in that country.

If preferences of asylum seekers are taken into account, is it highly likely that their reasons to move to another State will decrease or completely cease to exist, thus strongly reducing the phenomenon of secondary movements (the irregular and unauthorised move to a country other than the country of asylum) and ensuring that people can enjoy their full rights in the countries where they live.



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