



Migration: A European taskforce to resolve emergency situation on Lesvos

Brussels, 23 September 2020

Following the fire that devastated the Moria facility on the islands of Lesvos, the Commission announces today it will establish a dedicated taskforce to improve the situation on the island in a durable way. The taskforce will implement a joint pilot with the Greek authorities for new reception facilities. In line with the framework proposed today in the new [Pact on Migration](#) and Asylum, the taskforce will help ensure that migration is managed in an effective way, including adequate living conditions, more certainty through faster procedures and more balanced responsibility-sharing and solidarity. The taskforce will work in close collaboration with EU Agencies and international organisations on the ground.

Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: "*Moria is a stark reminder of the need to find sustainable solutions on migration. We are stepping up, with our EU agencies, to provide support to the migrants who were left without shelter, and to Greece. And we expect the other Member States to step in, too. Together we have to show that Europe manages migration in a humane and effective way. The European Commission is ready to contribute its share.*"

Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, said: "*Conditions in Moria, both before and after the fire, were unacceptable. Men, women and children living in overcrowded camps with poor sanitation and little access to health care. The taskforce brings together the central tenets of the Pact – fairness and efficiency for applicants and greater responsibility for Member States. It is not good enough to say never again, we need action and all Member States must play their part.*"

A comprehensive approach to migration in Greece

As a priority action, the taskforce will work closely with the Greek authorities to build **new reception facilities** in the coming months. The facilities will be of a European standard, durable infrastructure and will provide access to healthcare and adequate sanitation. They will take into account the specific needs of women, children and families, and will entail stronger involvement of EU Agencies and international organisations such as UNHCR and IOM.

In addition, the taskforce will oversee a number of actions, based on the principles of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum:

- **Ending overcrowding** through the transfer of remaining vulnerable people to the mainland and ongoing relocation of unaccompanied children and families with children to other Member States.
- **Fast, effective procedures** to bring clarity and certainty to applicants and improve the link between key processes, including asylum and return or integration supported by EU Agencies – EASO and Frontex.
- **Increased voluntary returns** through the implementation of the ongoing assisted voluntary return scheme that was previously stalled due to coronavirus.
- **Improved safety and security** for migrants and asylum seekers fully supported by EU Agencies – Frontex and Europol.

Ongoing emergency support

The Commission is providing emergency support to improve the immediate conditions for people affected by the fires in Lesvos. In addition to substantial operational and financial support already provided to Greece, the Commission granted €750,000 in emergency assistance to support the immediate humanitarian needs.

Greece also requested help through EU's Civil Protection Mechanism on 12 September and to date, over 100,000 items were supplied by Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden.

Thanks to financial support by the Commission, the Greek government immediately transferred 406 unaccompanied children from Lesvos to the mainland on the day of the fire. Ten Member States

(Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia*), Norway, and Switzerland have so far committed to take part in relocation efforts. The Commission is working with the German Presidency to organise their relocation to other Member States across the Union.

Thanks to efforts over the last 6 months, the number of residents of the Moria camp had more than halved (from 25,000 to 12,000), and most of the 1,200 unaccompanied children present there in March were transferred or relocated.

To protect people most at risk to coronavirus, together with the Greek authorities, the Commission supported the transfer of over 2,000 of the most vulnerable people from the 5 islands (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos) to the mainland. Under the ongoing relocation programme for unaccompanied children and vulnerable families, more than 750 people have been relocated from the Greek islands.

Background

On 8 and 9 September a number of fires destroyed the Moria reception camp on Lesvos in its entirety. No fatalities or serious injuries were recorded. However, 12,362 men, women and children were left without a home. The Commission provided immediate financial and operational support.

In her [State of the Union](#) address, President **von der Leyen** announced additional support from the Commission through a joint plan with the Greek authorities to build a new reception facility on Lesvos to assist with asylum and return processes and significantly improve the conditions for the refugees.

For More Information

[Press release](#) – A fresh start on migration: Building confidence and striking a new balance between responsibility and solidarity

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