Draft Action Plan: Stepping up EU-Turkey cooperation on support of refugees and migration management in view of the situation in Syria and Iraq

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[Version handed over on 5 October 2015 by European Commission President Juncker to the President of the Republic of Turkey Erdoğan]

Introduction

This Action Plan reflects the agreement between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Turkey to step up their cooperation on support of refugees and migration management in a coordinated effort to address the unprecedented refugee crisis created by the situation in Syria and Iraq. It follows from the EU-Turkey working dinner on 17 May and the informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government on 23 September 2015 where EU leaders called for a reinforced dialogue with Turkey at all levels. The Action Plan identifies a series of collaborative actions to be implemented as a matter of urgency by the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Turkey with the objective to assist Turkey in managing the situation of massive influx of refugees and preventing uncontrolled migratory flows from Turkey to the EU.

This Action Plan was elaborated jointly by the EU and Turkey. It constitutes an integral part of the on-going political dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Turkey. It builds upon the existing EU-Turkey relations, policy dialogue and cooperation instruments, and, more generally Turkey's EU accession process. This includes in particular the visa liberalisation dialogue, the EU-Turkey readmission agreement and the EU instruments for the provision of financial assistance to Turkey. The implementation of this Action Plan would also contribute to accelerate Turkey's fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap benchmarks.

The Action Plan, which contains both short-term and medium term measures, tries to address the current crisis situation in two ways: (a) by supporting the refugees and their host communities in Turkey (Part I) and (b) by strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU (Part II). It builds on and is consistent with commitments taken by Turkey and the EU in other contexts notably the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue. In both parts it identifies the actions that are to be implemented simultaneously by Turkey and the EU.

The implementation of the Action Plan will allow the EU and Turkey to:

Under Part I of the action plan:

- Cover further emergency needs by providing immediate humanitarian assistance to the refugees;
- Alleviate the burden undertaken by the Turkish society to host more than 2.2 million refugees;
- Create better living conditions and medium and long-term perspectives for the refugees in Turkey; and
- Address key factors that push the refugees to move from Turkey to the EU through irregular channels in search of alternative places of asylum.

Under Part 2 of the Action Plan:

- Prevent further arrivals of irregular migrants to Turkey and irregular departures of refugees and migrants from Turkey to the EU;
- Prevent losses of lives at sea by intensified search and rescue operations;
- Step up the fight against criminal networks involved in the smuggling of migrants; and
- Ensure prompt return to the point of origin of irregular migrants who are not in need of international protection and who were apprehended by the law enforcement agencies of the EU Member States or Turkey and support the reintegration of returnees to the countries of origin.

The implementation of the Action Plan is set to start immediately; it will be jointly steered and monitored by the European Commission and the High Representative / Vice President and the Turkish government through the establishment of the EU-Turkey high-level dialogue on migration.

Part I: Supporting the Syrian and Iraqi refugees and their Turkish hosting communities

Turkey is making commendable efforts to provide massive humanitarian aid and support to an unprecedented and continuously increasing influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq which has exceeded 2.2 million to date. Turkey has already spent more than € 6.75 billion of its own resources on addressing this crisis.

Under this part of the Action Plan, the two parties will undertake the following actions:

The EU side intends to:

1. **Mobilise up to €1 billion**[1] for the period 2015-16 to support Turkey in coping with the challenge represented by the presence of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. The identification of the funds to be mobilised and the areas where they should be allocated will be discussed and agreed with the Turkish authorities. Priority should be given to actions providing immediate humanitarian assistance; provision of legal, administrative and psychological support to refugees; support for community centres; the enhancement of self-sufficiency and employability of refugees and their social inclusion; improved access to education at all levels; but also actions supporting host communities in areas such as infrastructures and services.
2. Turkey could benefit from a fair share of the substantial increase of **the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis** announced at the 23 September European Council.
3. Continue to provide immediate and principled humanitarian assistance via humanitarian organisations in Turkey to address the most urgent humanitarian needs of refugees on the basis on their vulnerability in parallel and complementary to bilateral cooperation programmes aimed at addressing the needs created by the protracted refugee crisis.
4. To ensure an efficient use of the additional funding, the EU institutions, in close cooperation with Turkey, will proceed with a **comprehensive needs assessment** as a basis for programming. The assessment would allow designing adequate short, medium and long-term actions to address the needs of the refugees and the communities and regions hosting refugees to cope with the inflow of people, notably in terms of infrastructures and economic competitiveness.
5. Continue providing assistance to Syrian refugees hosted in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, as well as to Syrians displaced within Syria with the aim to contribute, *inter alia,* to the **weakening of push factors** forcing them to move towards Turkey. This new assistance intends to add to the over € 4.2 billion of total budget already mobilised by the Commission and Member States collectively in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.
6. Support existing Member State and EU **resettlement schemes and programmes,** which could enable refugees in Turkey **to enter the EU in an orderly manner**. Work on a structured EU-wide approach to resettlement shall be stepped-up.

Turkey intends to:

1. Continue and further enhance the effective implementation of the **law on foreigners and international protection** by adopting necessary secondary legislation and raising awareness of its content among all parties concerned.
2. Ensure that migrants are registered and provided with **appropriate documents** on a compulsory basis to enable to build a **stronger migration management strategy and system.**
3. Ensure that the **asylum procedures** that have been initiated are completed, so that the status of refugee is granted without delay to those whose asylum requests are positively assessed.
4. Continue to adopt and implement policies, legislation and programmes facilitating self-sufficiency and **inclusion of refugees into the Turkish society**. This includes in particular the adoption of measures enabling refugees to have **access, for the duration of their stay in Turkey, to labour market** and **public services** including education for pupils and access to health services. As indicated above, EU funding can be used to support such measures. The measures should also enable **refugees in need** to settle in appropriate accommodations by facilitating their access to available shelters and building new ones. In this respect, priority will be given to the opening of the **six refugee reception centres** built with the EU co-funding.

5. Ensure that **vulnerable people** (e.g. unaccompanied children on the move, victims of trafficking) are identified and taken care of.

Part II: Strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration

Under this part of the Action Plan, measures will build on the **visa liberalisation dialogue, the visa roadmap** and the provisions of the EU-Turkey **readmission agreement.** To this end, the two parties intend to undertake the following actions:

The EU side intends to:

1. Better inform refugees in Turkey about the risks linked to irregular departures as well as about the possibilities actually available to them to enter in an orderly manner into the European Union or in other countries, and the relevant procedures to be implemented.
2. Support Turkey to **strengthen its capacity to combat migrant smuggling**, notably by reinforcing the Turkish Coast Guard patrolling and surveillance capacity.
3. Support cooperation between EU Member States and Turkey in organising **joint return operations**, including **reintegration measures**, towards countries of origin of irregular migrants that are of interest to both sides.
4. Support the development of dialogue and cooperation with the authorities of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Bangladesh on preventing irregular migration, fighting against migrant smuggling and on improving the management of migration within the framework of the implementation of the "**Silk Routes' Partnership for migration**".
5. Enhance the EU capacity to **exchange information with Turkey on combating smuggling networks** by deploying a **FRONTEX liaison officer to Turkey** and by cooperating with the liaison officers already deployed by Turkey in the EU.
6. Increase the **financial assistance offered t**o support Turkey in developing a well-functioning asylum, migration, visa and **integrated border management system** in line with the EU-Turkey visa dialogue.

Turkey intends to:

1. Strengthen the **interception capacity of the Turkish Coast Guard**, notably by upgrading its surveillance equipment, increasing its patrolling activity and search and rescue capacity, and stepping up its cooperation with the Hellenic Coast Guard.
2. Step up cooperation and accelerate procedures in order to **smoothly readmit irregular migrants** who are not in need of international protection and were intercepted by Romanian, Greek or Bulgarian authorities coming from the Turkish territory in line with the established readmission obligations. Additional points for handing over of irregular migrants intercepted in the Aegean Sea should be opened.
3. Step up **cooperation with Bulgarian and Greek authorities** to prevent irregular migration across their common land borders by effectively implementing the tri-partite agreement signed in May 2015 establishing a common centre in Capitan Andreevo.
4. Strengthen the **visa requirements and residence rules applicable in Turkey** to nationals from countries that are potentially source of irregular migration for Turkey and the EU.
5. Develop further its **data analysis capacities** with the view to better assessing and managing migration flows on its territory.
6. Continue and further enhance the fight against criminal networks involved in the smuggling of migrants, notably by increasing operational cooperation between and among Turkish law enforcement authorities and their counterparts of the EU Member States and EU Agencies, including by strengthening rules on **personal data protection**. This would enhance the capacity relevant Turkish agencies to block in a timely manner the attempts of irregular departures and to investigate and dismantle smuggling networks.
7. Intensify the **exchange of information and cooperation** with the EU and its Member States. In particular, it will work closely with Member States' immigration liaison officers located in Turkey, including at the airports, in view of intensifying the fight against migrants smuggling networks, and of accelerating the identification of fraudulent travel documents and real identities of migrants.
8. Further intensify cooperation with FRONTEX by implementing the **working arrangement.**

[1] All references to EU funds are naturally subject to the availability of EU funds in the light of the appropriations decided by the budget authority, and in respect of the relevant budget

implementation rules and procedures.