

## Refugee crisis: Commission reviews 2015 actions and sets 2016 priorities

# BRUSSELS

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At their weekly meeting today, the College of Commissioners discussed the refugee crisis, looking at the measures taken in 2015 and the initiatives to be presented in spring 2016. In the past year an unprecedented rise in the number of people seeking international protection in Europe proved a major test for the Common European Asylum System and the Schengen area. The European Commission took swiftly measures to respond to the crisis, and continues to work with Member States and third country partners to manage the flow of people, protect Europe's borders, and address the root causes of these migratory pressures. 2016 will be another important year for progress towards an asylum system based on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibilities.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"We can only get out of this crisis together. 2016 must see clear and tangible results in regaining control of irregular flows and of our borders, starting with the next weeks and months. For this to happen, the EU as a whole must step up its efforts; the proposals the Commission has put on the table must be adopted and the approaches that were agreed in 2015 fully implemented. We need to make sure hotspots are fully operational and that people who arrive are properly registered and fingerprinted, also tackling secondary movements. We must get the relocation scheme off the ground and return those who have no right to stay. We should also cooperate better with third countries to address root causes and stem the flow, as well as improve return and readmission. In 2016 we need to return to Schengen's normal functioning, and to do that we must ensure that Member States do not feel the need to introduce or prolong internal border controls. The Commission will do everything that is necessary for this to happen. In addition, we will come up with forward-looking thinking and bold steps to make sure our asylum system is future proof and to help manage migratory flows in a sustainable way."*

European Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** added: *"We are at a crossroads in 2016. The decisions and actions we take together will define the future of our Union – because it is precisely what defines us as a Union that is at stake. On the one hand we need to urgently deliver on hotspots, relocation, returns, European Border Guards and a normalisation of Schengen. On the other hand, we must be bold and look ahead. That is why the Commission is already working hard to prepare a revision of the Dublin System, a permanent resettlement scheme and a comprehensive package on legal migration and integration. We cannot lose sight of the bigger picture."*