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Outcome of the Extraordinary European Council of 23 September 2015

At a special meeting on migration on 23 September 2015, EU Heads of State or Government agreed on increasing financial assistance to EU external relations initiatives and United Nations' programmes, strengthening the EU's external borders, enhancing cooperation with third countries, fighting root causes of the migration crisis and reinforcing diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Syria. According to the [statement](#) issued by Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, the agreement to set up 'hotspots' in frontline Member States, by November 2015 at the latest, constitutes a great achievement.

Background

[The aim of this extraordinary, informal European Council](#) on migration was, in the words of Donald Tusk, 'to have an "honest discussion" among leaders on the nature of the problem and possible solutions'. As foreseen in the [EPRS Outlook for the Extraordinary European Council on 23 September 2015](#), the debates went beyond discussion of a relocation scheme, and focused instead on the overall approach to the crisis. The relocation of 120,000 migrants was already decided upon at the previous 22 September 2015 [meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers](#).

Mr Tusk reported an '[excellent atmosphere](#)' between the members of the European Council, clearly [improved](#) from the atmosphere at previous European Council meetings dedicated to migration. In their [statement](#), EU Heads of State or Government stressed again the need to 'work together in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility.'

Outcome of the European Council meeting

European leaders agreed on orientations regarding operational decisions before the 15-16 October 2015 European Council in the following areas:

Increasing immediate financial assistance

The European Council agreed to support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and other agencies with at least an additional 1 billion euro financial assistance. The EU's 'Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis' ('[Madad Fund](#)') will be increased and provide assistance to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries in dealing with the Syrian crisis. EU Heads of State or Government also approved increasing the funding of the [Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa](#) through additional contributions by Member States.

Measures strengthening the EU's external borders

In order to strengthen controls at the EU's external borders, the funding of the [Emergency Fund for Asylum, Integration and Migration](#) and the [Internal Security Fund-Borders](#) will be enhanced, as well as using additional resources for Frontex, EASO and Europol.

Setting up 'hotspots'

EU Heads of State or Government decided that 'hotspots' will be set up in front-line Member States by the end of November 2015 at the latest. These Member States will receive assistance by the European institutions, the agencies and other Member States in order to ensure identification, registration and

fingerprinting of migrants. The 'hotspots' will also be used for ensuring relocation and returns. [German chancellor Angela Merkel made clear](#) that for her, 'hotspots' are a condition for any type of relocation plan, because this ensures that migrants are duly registered.

Enhancing cooperation with third countries

The dialogue with Turkey in particular will be reinforced at all levels, in order to reduce and manage migratory flows. This will already be discussed during the upcoming visit of the Turkish President to Brussels on 5 October 2015.

Fighting the root causes of the migration crisis

In the coming months the European Union will hold two summits together with countries of origin or transit of irregular migration flows; namely a High-Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean-[Western Balkans Route](#) (8 October 2015) in Luxembourg convened by Luxembourg's Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Jean Asselborn, and Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission. Second, the Valletta Summit on migration (11-12 November 2015) with African and other key countries of origin and transit will address issues such as the root causes of migration, establishing and organising legal migration channels, enhancing the protection of migrants and asylum seekers, tackling the trafficking of migrants and improving cooperation on return and readmission.

Reinforcing diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Syria

The European Council called for a renewed UN-led international effort to bring an end to the war in Syria, which has forced an estimated 12 million people to leave their homes. EU Heads of State or Government also committed the EU to play its part in this respect. European leaders also pledged the Union's support for the formation of a government of national unity in Libya.

Implementation of existing rules

The European Council emphasised the need to apply and implement existing rules, in particular the Dublin regulation and the Schengen acquis. This call for common European standards under existing legislation coincides with the European Commission's [40 infringement decisions](#) adopted on 23 September 2015 against 19 Member States for failure to fully transpose and correctly implement the Common European Asylum System.

Next steps

The European Council urged the institutions, Agencies and Member States to accelerate their work on all aspects of the migration crisis and invited the European Commission to present proposals on the mobilisation of the EU budget to support the orientations.

The President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz confirmed in his [speech](#) before the European Council that 'the European Parliament will now engage as a matter of priority with the Council on the whole range of proposals presented by President Juncker on 9 September, and indeed present its own further proposals, including all short and long-term aspects of asylum and migration policy.'

The next meeting of the European Council is scheduled for 15-16 October 2015. According to its [draft annotated agenda](#) and the European Council 23 September statement, it will again focus strongly on migration, and take stock of what has been done since the June European Council, prepare the Valletta Summit and discuss the follow-up to the High-level Conference on the Eastern-Mediterranean-Western Balkans Route.

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