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MISSION REPORT

following the mission to Italy (18 - 21 April 2017)

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Members of the mission:

Barbara Kudrycka	(PPE) (Co-leader of the mission)
Juan Fernando López Aguilar	(S&D) (Co-leader of the mission)
Branislav Škripek	(ECR)
Jaromír Štětina	(PPE)
Miltiadis Kyrkos	(S&D)
Anna Maria Corazza Bildt	(PPE)
Morten Helveg Petersen	(ALDE)

Accompanying Members:

Alessandra Mussolini	(PPE)
Cécile Kashetu Kyenge	(S&D)
Barbara Spinelli	(GUE/NGL)
Salvatore Domenico Pogliese	(PPE)

I. Background and objective of the mission

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) decided to include this mission to Italy, together with a subsequent mission to Greece in May 2017, in its planning of missions for the first semester of 2017 against the background of the challenges related to the management of irregular arrivals by sea of asylum-seekers and migrants to the EU. The objective was to observe migration management in the two main frontline Member States, both benefiting from the September 2015 Council decisions on relocation and where the hotspots approach is implemented. It also aimed to feed in the current legislative work on the reform of the Common European Asylum System.

The delegation visit was designed as a fact-finding mission to explore the situation on the ground regarding the implementation of asylum and migration EU policies and legislation as well as external border policies. The programme included therefore visits to a reception camp (Castelnuovo di Porto), a disembarkation port applying hotspot procedures (Augusta) and a hotspot (Pozzallo). During the mission, the delegation met with representatives of the Italian authorities, European and international organisations, including the European Commission, relevant EU agencies and the UNHCR, as well as non-governmental organisations.

II. Overview of the situation migrants and refugees in Italy - context of the visit¹

The Policy Department had prepared a background in-depth analysis for the mission², providing information on the current situation of asylum and migration in Italy and focusing in particular on the “hotspots” and on the asylum procedures. The paper describes the applicable legislative framework, as recently amended, as well as its practical application. The following paragraphs only provide some contextual highlights regarding the factual and legal background of the mission.

Migratory flows to Italy remain high; the number of arrivals via the “Central Mediterranean route” in 2016 have marked a new record with 181,126 persons (18 per cent more than in 2015). The top three nationalities were Nigerians (over 37,000), Eritreans (over 20,000) and Guineans (over 13,000). Although partial and not allowing for extrapolations over the whole country, it may be indicative to note that figures for the first months of 2017 reported in places visited by the delegation showed some converging trends towards an increase of arrivals of nationals from Bangladesh, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Gambia. Arrivals of unaccompanied children (UAMs) are also on the rise, with 25,846 reported by national authorities for 2016, i.e more than double the 2015 figure.

The “Central Mediterranean route” to the EU remains very much in use and search and rescue activities remain intense and necessary to save lives. At the time of the visit, the question of the role of NGOs in such operations was very much in the public debate, and was discussed on several occasions during the mission (see below, in particular at the meetings in the ICC

¹ Information presented in this report is based on developments until the time of the mission.

² European Parliament, Policy Department Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Rosa Raffaelli, [Background information for the LIBE delegation on migration and asylum in Italy – April 2017](#), PE583.136.

and the Prefecture of Catania)¹.

Four hotspots have been set up in Italy, three of which in Sicily (including Pozzallo) for a total capacity of 1600 places. Hotspots in Italy being both physical areas and an approach to their management, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which have been drafted for the hotspots started, in December 2016, to be applied to another 15 places of disembarkation, such as the harbour of Augusta. However, no reception capacities have been set up there. Third country nationals arriving there are transferred immediately thereafter to first reception centres. Hotspots are meant to ensure proper identification, registration and fingerprinting of arriving third-country nationals. The question of their legal basis is being discussed in Italy, although a new law decree (13/2017)² adopted just before the visit of the delegation mentioned hotspots for the first time in Italian legislation and provides a legal basis for the detention of migrants who refuse fingerprinting. Altogether, identification, registration and fingerprinting has improved a lot since the setting up of hotspots, as acknowledged by the European Commission with the closure in December 2016 of the infringement procedures it had launched against Italy³. Italian authorities now report a rate of identification, registration and fingerprinting of almost 100%.

Linked to the establishment of hotspots was the implementation of the relocation decisions adopted by the Council in September 2015. Figures here have been very low and notwithstanding “a progressive increase in the pace of relocations”, as noted by the European Commission in its [Tenth report on relocation and resettlement](#), as of 28 February only 3,936 persons had been relocated from Italy, far from the initial target⁴.

The new “Minniti-Orlando” law decree 13/2017 establishing new rules on asylum and immigration in Italy had just entered into force when the delegation visited the country. Another recent piece of legislation was also commented upon at the time of the visit, even though it had not yet been published at the time, i.e. the law on unaccompanied minors adopted on 29 March 2017. Among others, the new provisions will reduce the length of stay in first reception centres, facilitate access to healthcare and education, and improve the rules on age assessments and guardianship.

Finally, relations with third countries should also be mentioned in this very brief overview. The Italian Government had recently concluded an agreement with the Prime Minister of Libya concerning cooperation in the fight against irregular immigration, smuggling and border security. According to the press, the agreement had been provisionally suspended by the Court of Appeals in Tripoli in March 2017⁵. Further technical agreements have been

¹ It is however to be noted that after the delegation visit, the press reported that related investigations ended up with no proof of wrongdoing (see <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-ngo-idUSKBN17Z260>).

² Also referred by authorities met during the mission as “Minniti-Orlando law-decree”, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2017-04-18:48>

³ See Commissioner Avramopoulos’ declarations on 8 December 2016, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4281_en.htm

⁴ [The Eleventh Report on relocation and resettlement](#) indicates a rise, with 5,001 people were relocated from Italy as of 10 April 2017.

⁵ See Policy Department Briefing, op. cit. p. 13 for more information.

reached with Niger at the end of March¹ and with Libyan southern tribes at the beginning of April² with the view of sealing off the Southern border of Libya.

III. Briefing Meeting on 10 April 2017

A preparatory meeting took place in Brussels one week before the mission, with visio-conference connections with Warsaw (European Border and Coast Guard Agency - EBCGA) and audio-conference with Rome (EP Office).

Édouard Schmidt from European Commission DG Home recalled the main objectives of hotspots set up by the EU, i.e. to ensure early identification, registration, relocation and return. He explained that to this aim, EU agencies cooperate with intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, under the supervision of Italian authorities, to help channel asylum seekers into the appropriate procedures. In November 2015 the Commission deployed staff to Italy to assist with the swift opening of hotspots and the development of SOPs which are applied even beyond the hotspots. To date, four EU officers are based in Rome and regularly travel through Italy. Registration of migrants in the hotspots has improved a lot since the end of 2015. The Commission also plays a specific role in coordinating the EU Regional Task Force, particularly since the entry into force of the new Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Weekly meetings are thus being held with such agencies.

Mr Schmidt noted that at the moment of the briefing, four hotspots had been set up in Italy, three of which in Sicily, with a total capacity of 1600 places. Two thirds of disembarkations took place outside hotspots in the first year of operation. In December 2016, SOPs have started to be applied to another 15 places of disembarkation. According to Mr Schmidt, in order to face pressure, the hotspot capacity in Sicily should reach 3000 places. From the places the delegation was to visit, Mr Schmidt noted that the Pozzallo hotspot was the third place of arrival in Italy, behind the port of Augusta which welcomed 8000 people in 2016. Italian authorities have indicated that they are ready to open new hotspots soon, in some places where reception capacity is being built up.

Mr Schmidt referred to the recent changes in the Italian legislation, presenting them as aiming to accelerate the asylum procedures by limiting appeals to one instance, hiring more staff, opening more pre-return detention centres (1600 places as an objective), increasing Italy's voluntary return capacity and improving the management of facilities. In his view, efforts at national level go hand in hand with efforts at EU level, also for the work on the external dimension of migration, cooperation with Libya being seen as essential.

Regarding relocations, Mr Schmidt clarified that figures have reached about 1/8 of the targets set in September 2015 (5000 out of 40000). In his view, efforts are paying off and the rhythm

¹ See <http://www.lastampa.it/2017/04/01/esteri/dallitalia-milioni-al-niger-per-rinforzare-le-sue-frontiere-in-chiave-anti-migranti-2VId9tJDS08TDLWN0UeBAP/pagina.html> and http://www.agi.it/rubriche/africa/2017/03/31/news/migranti_gentiloni_50 mln per la cooperazione in niger-1638448/

² See <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/italy-brokers-deal-with-libyan-tribes-to-curb-migrant-influx>

has increased, with a record reached in the previous month of 1000 relocations.

François Bienfait from EASO briefly explained what activities are undertaken by the organisation in Italy, with a focus on operational and technical support provided in the frame of hotspots. He recalled the need for the Office to act on the basis of an operating plan signed with the host Member State which describes the objectives of support team. EASO is involved in Italy since 2010 and has adopted a new way of operating since September 2015. The latest operation plan was signed in December 2016. In Italy, EASO mainly assists with registrations, contrary to Greece where support is also provided in the first step of the application procedure. The main part of EASO's role is focused on providing information to applicants, especially for relocation, pre-identification and registration of possible Dublin cases (family reunification), registration of take charge requests, strengthening capacities for UAMs, training, and providing country of origin information.

At the moment of the briefing EASO was present in 4 hotspots and 7 registration hubs, having experts as well in the Dublin Unit of the Italian Government in Rome. Mr Bienfait reported that the main challenge lied with the insufficient reception capacity of hotspots. New openings are being considered but this remains to be confirmed. For planning purposes EASO would welcome some more clarification on possible dates for future openings. Regarding the situation of minors in particular, Mr Bienfait noted positively the changes in the new Italian law. He mentioned a recent and encouraging commitment from Austria to relocate 50 minors from Italy. Those concerned are mainly Eritreans (Syrians, Iraqis and Yemenis to a far lesser extent) but those nationalities are getting less and less represented in the new arrivals.

Jozsef Bali and Florea Ganea reported on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) activities in Italy. 141 experts are being deployed every month, following SOPs for identification and supporting registration with fingerprinting officers. Two screening teams, ten fingerprinting officers and two team leaders are active per hotspot. Moreover, the Agency is present in all disembarkation places. Its representatives indicated the availability of all its experts deployed to be directly asked by the LIBE delegation about their work, although they are not authorised to give any information to press.

IV. Summary of the meetings and visits

18 April 2017 – Rome

Visit of the International Coordination Centre (ICC) for the Joint FRONTEX/EBCGA Operation TRITON (Pratica di Mare)

Participants: Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Alessandra Mussolini (PPE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), MEPs

General Antonino Iraso from the Italian Navy welcomed the delegation. He explained that the ICC gathers law enforcement services involved in Operation Triton which operate in the Western Mediterranean for the control of EU maritime borders. The Navy is here involved with the Guardia di Finanza, Frontex/EBCG and the Ministry of Interior. The ICC coordinates police activity as a way to control borders and fight trafficking activities, including drug trafficking. The ICC is to be distinguished from the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center

(MRCC) which is located in the centre of Rome and coordinates search and rescue operations.

The representative of the Guardia di Finanza explained that his institution is hosting this major operational coordination. It is a police body organised in a military fashion with aerial and naval sections including long range and coastal components. It is involved in investigations and repression of all illegal activities at sea, including irregular immigration, smuggling and trafficking activities.

Frontex Operational Officer Enache Iani Gica presented Triton as a complex and multipurpose operation deployed at sea and on land and focused on tackling irregular immigration, under ICC command. Twenty seven Member States are expected to participate in this operation, as well as third states with observer status. However, when those same vessels engage in search and rescue, they fall under MRCC command and can leave the Triton operational area under MRCC authorisation. Triton allowed the rescue of about 180.000 people in 2016 (90.000 by Frontex). As to the main tasks of Frontex, he mentioned support in registration, including fingerprinting, and identification of people arriving, screening as well as debriefing activities.

Regarding migration flows, it was explained that activity is concentrated mostly on the Libyan coast, while there are some incidents of fishing boats coming from Egypt or Turkey. A film was presented, showing the registration process on board during a search and rescue operation, including health checks which are undertaken before disembarking.

Generally speaking, the difficulty of collecting evidence in cases of smuggling and human trafficking was acknowledged. Moreover, difficulties in carrying out investigations involving several countries, notably third countries, were also pointed as a major limitation to the work of the Italian judiciary. Financial tracking is difficult as well, especially since the current use of very basic dinghies involves very low costs, with no crew having to be paid, as smuggled migrants themselves are often charged with steering the dinghy. Criminal charges are not pressed against such migrants if after the debriefing it prove they are not facilitators.

Upon questions raised by the Members, the issue of the links between facilitation, smuggling and humanitarian assistance was discussed - a major debate at the time of the visit with Frontex, which was in particular echoed in the LIBE committee¹ and in the Italian press. The Frontex representative clarified that the agency's role is limited to collecting evidence from ships, after which it is up to the Italian authorities to pursue. It was further said by the Italian authorities that humanitarian assistance is not criminalised in Italy and that in the last year, there has been no case of people being charged for facilitating irregular migration. Italian authorities recalled that NGOs are free to sail with a flag in international waters, are bound by the duty to save lives at sea and contribute to saving lives in the area. So long as no evidence has been found to establish that NGOs are involved in illegal activities, the Italian authorities have no reason to act against this freedom to sail.

Questions were also raised on the impact of the EU-Turkey Statement. Italian authorities indicated that, although the Statement has reduced the number of people crossing the Aegean sea, smugglers tend to avoid areas covered by the joint operation Poseidon using routes around Crete and crossing the Ionian sea, to enter into the Italian territorial waters.

¹ cf Exchange of views with Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri on 22 March 2017

To conclude, General Antonino Iraso clarified that interventions coordinated at the ICC are linked to law enforcement activities and border control activities. As to the choice of where people saved in international waters (12 miles off coasts) will be disembarked, under international law, it is, first, up to the vessels carrying out SAR and legally sailing under different flags to choose to bring them to safety in Italian waters, and then up to the Italian authorities to designate the disembarkation port. The Guardia di Finanza tries not to involve fishermen and merchant ships in SAR, as this would involve for them economic damage. Any intelligence gathering or investigations conducted with merchant ships or vessels run by NGOs for search and rescue operations are not part of the ICC or Triton's responsibilities.

Meetings with UNHCR, IOM, ASGI (Associazione per gli studi giuridici sull'immigrazione) and ARCI (Tavolo Asilo)

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Alessandra Mussolini (PPE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), MEPs

The UNHCR representative recalled that 2016 was a record year for migrant and refugees arrivals in Italy and stressed that figures for 2017 indicate yet a further increase. He noted that Italian authorities had stated that a crisis situation would be reached if figures would get to the levels that they are likely reach in May. As for asylum applications, Italy registered 120,000 last year, the highest number in the EU after Germany.

The IOM Director of the coordination office in Rome pointed to the complexity of the situation in Italy. Third country nationals arriving in Italy are mainly from West Africa (notably from Nigeria, Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire) and male. Only 10 per cent are women; the only exception lies with Nigerians, 30 per cent of whom are female, mostly victims of trafficking (accounting for up to 80 per cent). High numbers of unaccompanied minors keep on arriving. He estimated that the unstable situation in Libya is very much a push factor by itself. He stressed that fewer third-country nationals arriving in Italy were in transit and more tend to stay in the country although they wish to join other Member States, and there is also a progressive change in the nationalities of origin.

The NGOs raised issues related to the reception of incoming third-country nationals. They expressed concern as to information provided in relation to rights and procedures. They mentioned a practice according to which not only people having disembarked in a hotspot area are being registered and identified there, but also people reported to have been arrested at the border in Ventimiglia (Northern-West border) and brought to the Taranto hotspot despite having already made an application for asylum or holding a residence permit. They also criticized the recent legislative change (Minniti-Orlando law-decree) which removed one appeal stage from the procedure for international protection and reduced legal guarantees as to the right to be heard at second level, while they pointed at the lack of identification of vulnerabilities, leading to vulnerable persons being denied their rights.

Some concerns were expressed in relation to return and readmission agreements with third-countries, in particular the agreement signed by Italian authorities with Libya. Such an agreement seems to be foreseen as well with Tunisian authorities. These should not go against the right to an individual examination of situations and access to the asylum procedure. Finally, they turned to the issue of the role of NGOs involved in search and rescue operations, already raised in the afternoon at the ICC, expressing concerns as to possible criminalisation

of such NGO interventions.

During the question time UNHCR clarified that the agreement with Libya (which is not recognised as a safe country by the UNHCR) has not been endorsed by the Italian Parliament and is legally disputed in Libya. Libyan authorities tend to intercept people within their national waters, before they reach international waters, but if a formal search and rescue operation is carried out in international waters, it is in line with international law that people are directed to Italy, as this is the safest place. No new paths seem to be created after the EU-Turkey statement for Syrians, as very few arrive in Italy. UNHCR noted that the majority of the third country nationals present in Italy (160,000 out of 200,000) are accommodated in emergency accommodation, only 25,000 being hosted in small accommodation, while the authorities seem to consider the option of tents if numbers continue to rise. The majority, as stated before, has applied for asylum, while the average recognition rate is 40 percent. IOM went on over the topic of Libya having previously been a destination country and now falling apart. Generalisations should be avoided, as refugee paths differ among the 60 nationalities registered every year. Eritreans for instance do not come to stay in Libya. Others have a different approach and came for work, although the situation is changing. Bangladeshi for instance seem to be actively recruited to come and work in Libya, in a much organised manner. In the same way, the number of Gambians seem to be stable around 2,000 every year. IOM regretted that the question of developing legal channels for migration to the EU is so little raised.

Meetings with institutional representatives - Mr Federico Gelli, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee of inquiry on the reception and detention system for migrants; Mr Erasmo Palazzotto, Member of the Parliamentary Committee of inquiry on the reception and detention system for migrants; Mr Mauro Palma, Ombudsman for the rights of detained persons; Ms Filomena Albano, Ombudsman for children and youth

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Alessandra Mussolini (PPE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL) - MEPs

Mr Gelli referred to the report of the Parliamentary Committee of inquiry on the reception and detention system for migrants¹ which describes the main anomalies in the reception system currently in place in Italy. The main problem noted is that the majority of asylum seekers are accommodated in exceptional, temporary structures (first reception centres, CAS) where reception conditions and services are often insufficiently developed, while only the minority is hosted in proper second reception centres (SPRAR). Reception of unaccompanied migrants and medical health care provided to migrants are particularly worrying. A special report on this latter subject is being prepared. The work of the Committee, which constitutes the only monitoring mechanism of the reception facilities across the country, is based on a series of missions carried to the hotspots and on further monitoring work regarding all reception

¹ http://www.camera.it/_dati/leg17/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/022bis/006/INTERO.pdf ; <http://documenti.camera.it/apps/nuovosito/Documenti/DocumentiParlamentari/parser.asp?idLegislatura=17&categoria=022bis&tipologiaDoc=documento&numero=008&doc=intero>, quoted in Policy Department briefing, op. cit., p. 6.

centres throughout the country. Prefects have all been approached to collect information on the way reception centres are organised. Mr Gelli stressed that information received lately is of great concern.

Mr Palazzotto, Member of that same Parliamentary Committee, referred to his minority report on the hotspots. He raised in particular the absence of a proper legal basis for the hotspots notably for applying detention in that framework. In legal terms, Pozzallo should still be regarded as a reception centre under Italian law. He also referred to the question of forced finger-printing which has been recorded by some NGOs like Amnesty International.

Ms Albano presented her work as Ombudsperson for children and its application in the field of migration. She mentioned that, as far as the legal framework is concerned, the necessary guarantees are in place, even at constitutional level, while the new Zampa law marked a further positive development, although its implementation on the ground would have to be followed up. She explained that her work is to come up with recommendations to the many administrations responsible for different aspects, such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education, as well as to the various levels of public intervention, State and regions and territorial bodies. The approach should be to regard children in migration as being children in the first place. They should not be returned nor should they remain in reception centres for too long. So far the law allowed to keep minors in reception centres for a maximum of 60 days - to be reduced to come 30 days under the new legislation. However, such stay can be much longer. Ms Albano raised the particular issue of guardianship for unaccompanied minors and the situation in first reception centres. In Italy, it is the judge who appoints guardians and monitors their activity. Guardians should be appointed immediately through a uniform system. Currently are often mayors, local councilors or lawyers who may end up being responsible for hundreds of children (there are very few private volunteers). The new legislation provides for new agreements for training volunteer guardians.

Mr Palma recalled that the Ombudsman for the rights of detained persons is an authority established by the President of the Republic. His scope of action goes from detention centres to police offices, reception centres for migrants or closed medical centres. The Ombudsman had just delivered a report to the Parliament (still to be translated at the time of the visit). He reported that the average length of stay in hotspots was 5,5 days, 2,5 in the case of Pozzallo, however it is between 15 and 20 days for minors due to a lack of adequate accommodation and between 15 and 20 days in Lampedusa for adults and minors alike. He noted some positive elements, such as the use of cultural mediators. He expressed concerns regarding the practice of forced returns, which are being carried out every day and for which different rules may apply depending on the country concerned.

During the question time, the issue of disappearing minors was raised, also in relation to fingerprinting, without getting any conclusive answer as to the breadth of the phenomenon. The situation of the Mineo CARA in Sicily was also discussed, Mr Palazzotto seeing it as a symbol of the deterioration of reception centres in Italy while Mr Gelli reserved his judgement since legal enquiries are going on and will have to assess political responsibilities. The fact that the structure of the camp was originally designed for American soldiers and ill-suited for hosting asylum-seekers was acknowledged. Regarding children, Ms Albano further clarified that Italian law forbids detention. However, due to bottlenecks and lack of reception capacities, minors tend to spend more than 60 days in the reception centres. Relocation capacity for children and family reunification under Dublin is also very limited and takes too

long, which also contributes to the issue of children going missing.

Dinner with Undersecretary of State to the Ministry of Interior Domenico Manzione and Deputy Prefect Simona Spinelli (Head of the Dublin Unit)

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D) - MEPs

This informal dinner gave an opportunity to the delegation to appraise the need for a reform of the current Dublin Regulation, given the factual evidence of its limits, insufficiencies and contradictions. MEPs and their guests exchanged on their concern that the proposal as tabled by the Commission may not provide a real European response to the management of arrivals of third-country nationals. Moreover, the status of implementation of the relocation decisions was discussed. It was acknowledged that numbers were very low compared to agreed targets and this did not help Italy in dealing with growing arrivals of third-country nationals. Besides, people arriving tend to be less and less of a nationality that is eligible for relocation (Eritreans, Syrians, Iraqis). The Italian authorities reported also on the impact of the EU-Turkey statement which has changed behavioural pattern of traffickers. They are now back to Libya and the situation is worse. MEPs were informed about the resources allocated, the procedures, the structural impact resulting from the variation of the Aegean route back again to Libya, side effects (e.g. suspicions on the role of NGOs) and the ‘collateral damages’, such as the over-use of national regional and local capacities of territorial entities and forces involved. The discussions concluded on the observation that a European response is still missing and expected, and that the Italian contribution to the management of migration flows had to be acknowledged.

19 April 2017 – Castelnuovo di Porto/Catania

Visit of the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers CARA) of Castelnuovo di Porto

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL) - MEPs

The delegation was welcomed by deputy Prefect Roberto Leone and the Director of the Centre, Dott. Akati Zubaidy. A short briefing session allowed MEPs to get an overview of the functioning of the Centre.

The Centre has a capacity of 900 and hosted 782 third country nationals at the time of the visit, of which about 50% Eritreans, followed by about 10% Nigerians, Bangladeshi, Gambians and Guineans. Eritreans are brought to this Centre mainly in view of their relocation, as it is close to Fiumicino airport. The population is mainly male (584) but counts also some families. However, the Centre does not host any unaccompanied minor. Among asylum seekers staying at the Centre, there is a high success rate at appeal level. Following recognition, those hosted in the Centre wait to be moved to a SPRAR.

Services are provided by an external service provider (Cooperative Auxilium, under a 3-year contract). They include legal advice, psychological guidance, health assistance, language classes. The Prefecture monitors provision of services, including through on-the-spot

inspections. The Centre is open and people are free to come and go, even though times have to be respected. People staying in the Centre have already gone through registration and identification procedures. Guests can ask for tickets, e.g. for public transports. Absence for more than 72 hours means removal from the Centre unless there was an urgency. However, people may not be expelled from the country as long as the asylum procedure is not completed. The length of stay is linked to the length of the procedure. In practice, the average is 1.2 years, with some cases of people staying longer than 2 years. People eligible for relocation stay between 4 and 6 months.

Replying to questions on relocation, Deputy Prefect Leone explained that the programme is managed by the Dublin unit, but he provided some informal data. Out of the 40,000 target, about 4,000 people have been relocated to other parts of the EU to date, i.e. less than 10%. 2,600 people were relocated last year while the pace has been accelerated in recent months, at the moment the rate is about 300/400 a month (370 Eritreans and 21 Syrians have been relocated from the Centre). The Castelnuovo di Porto CARA is also used a relocation hub, but there are three other such hubs in Rome. Also, some people are brought directly to airports from other Centres in Italy. Deputy Prefect Leone stressed thus that the delegation would only get a partial picture here. From his point of view, the relocation programme has improved the rate of registration of third-country nationals who, like Eritreans and Syrians for instance, initially did not intend to stay in Italy. The system seems to be accepted, with clear rules explained from the start. The Director further explained that when people are found to be eligible for relocation, they can choose between staying in Italy or being relocated. Most want to join their family. They are free to refuse relocation- however, at the moment they tend to give preference to relocation.

Regarding rumours on the possible closure of the centre raised during the question time, the deputy Prefect mentioned that the Centre suffers indeed from some structural problems therefore public or private alternatives are being looked at. An assessment process is continuing and should lead to a change at some point, but nothing has been decided yet.

Regarding children living in the Centre, the Director of the Centre explained that all kids are schooled at the nearby town of Castelnuovo di Porto. The youngest can go to the kindergarden and the internal nursery run by the Centre. This frees some time for their parents to follow language classes or receive assistance with their asylum application. Trips outside the Centre are organised for children and families. Among the 175 rooms, separate accommodation is organised for single men, single women and families. Regarding measures to facilitate integration, the stress is placed here on language classes. Secondary reception centres (SPRAR) work more towards integration to the labour market. People in the Centre received also some pocket money in voucher form (2,5 euro per day) which they could spend in the Centre. The rules of the Centre were explained to the guests in their mother tongue as they arrived. There are also different options in the everyday meals served, and a separate family canteen.

Questions were raised also in relation to the new Minniti-Orlando law-decree on asylum and its potential impact. Deputy Prefect Leone clarified that the new law, for the part which suppresses the second level of appeal in the asylum procedure, will enter into force in six months, therefore it is premature to discuss any possible impact on people staying in the Centre.

As for access to health care, it was explained that guests are signed up to the national health system and benefit from a 24-hour service. Whenever necessary guests can consult or visit external practitioners may be under agreements made with medical health centres and hospitals. Psychiatrists may administer drugs, and doctors working in the Centre on a 24-hour basis monitor their effects-there is a clear policy trying to limit unnecessary use of drugs.

After the briefing, the delegation could visit the Centre and meet some social workers, cultural mediators and representatives of some NGOs, and visit the sports ground, the pharmacy, the general canteen, the children's playground and other facilities.

Members had the opportunity to exchange informally with residents of the Centre waiting to be relocated to another European country, both Syrians and Eritreans. They pointed out to the members the long waiting period as some had been waiting in the center between 10 months and 1 year and 4 months. This long waiting period seemed to be more acute to single women with children because of their specific vulnerability (difficulties were also reported to some members regarding acceptance rate of Member States of single women with children in the case of Eritreans).

Meeting at Prefecture of Catania, with prefecture, judicial, police and navy authorities

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

Prefect Riccio explained that all authorities having very different remits work together as a team. Catania is the number two port of Sicily for disembarkation, after Augusta. 1200 migrants disembarked in Catania in 2016, mostly minors. This involves a lot of work and organisation, including on holidays such as during the Easter week-end just before the delegation visit, when a high number of third country nationals were rescued and disembarked in Sicily. Disembarking takes a long time, given numbers and procedures involved, and the need to find accommodation for those disembarked.

General Prosecutor of Catania Salvatore Scalia explained that he is acting as coordinator for various prosecuting offices (Ragusa, Syracuse, Caltagirone) in the fight against crimes linked to migration. Not only the coastal areas are affected by the arrival of large numbers of third country nationals by sea, but the whole region, in his opinion, is struggling to welcome these people.

Although not being able to report on ongoing investigations, prosecutors explained the current situation in the maritime region. There is a significant increase in migrants arriving on Sicilian coasts. Migrants and refugees are being rescued close to African coasts. This was confirmed and further explained by Nuncio Martello, the Commander of the Capitaneria of the port, who indicated that smugglers load dinghies with fuel that is sufficient only to get out of Libyan waters. The Italian navy has found vessels just outside Libyan waters that are utterly inappropriate to navigate on international waters. For criminal organisations, this evolution means increased profits, as they can use ever smaller boats. Smugglers also use migrants to steer the boats which means that they do not have to call on people who belong to their criminal organisations for this purpose. This makes the work of the judiciary more difficult. Professional traffickers and smugglers need to be treated differently from migrants

used to steer the boats.

According to the prosecutors, among arriving third-country nationals many are economic migrants

Beyond the issue of smuggling and search and rescue operations, the situation at the Mineo reception centre was raised. The centre is difficult to manage due notably to its size. Criminal activities are being reported and smugglers are operating there as well. Minors are also hosted in the Centre, requiring a different treatment according to the law. The Centre's capacity is limited to 2000 but actual figures can go up to 3500. The police gets involved in tasks of public order (fights, prostitution, murder attempts...) and this creates a problem of resources to carry out other police tasks in the rest of the area. Questore Giuseppe Gualtieri pointed to the length of the procedure, after a very quick "immediate" reception. According to him, the period of uncertainty is so long that it becomes exasperating for asylum seekers. People are not occupied and end up on the streets. The Questore invited the delegation to look at solutions not just related to the immediate reception, registration and identification issues, but also to what happens afterwards notably in relation to education, access to the labour market and more generally integration,.

Carmelo Petralia, Prosecutor for Ragusa, explained that Pozzallo is a port falling within his jurisdiction. It is a main landing port where numbers of arrivals have increased since 2014. As a prosecutor, he works and joins efforts with different law enforcement bodies, the Guardia di finanza and the Coast guard. They devised a protocol for interview proceedings with migrants. The prosecution flags out evidence about anyone who has been sailing the vessels and brought them to Sicily. Once these people are brought to Sicily, they are placed on a list of suspects of smuggling. He gave the following figures regarding 'facilitators': 182 arrested in 2015, 200 in 2016, 17 up to know (incl. last arrivals) in 2017. Smugglers tend to be mainly Egyptians, Turkish or Ukrainians. Judges provide their interpretation of the role played by the different persons, to try and distinguish between facilitators and actual professional smugglers or traffickers. Professionals tend to work in organised groups.

Francesco Paolo Giordano, Prosecutor of Syracuse set up in 2006 a coordinated unit to tackle irregular migration. It includes carabinieri, coast guards, Guardia di finanza, judicial bodies, and police forces. From 2011 to 2016, a clear increase in arrivals was noted, while 700 facilitators were arrested and 60 boats were seized. The unit does not deal with the organised crime aspect, unless in relation to facilitation, but it maintains close links with the anti-mafia unit with which it exchanges data. He confirmed that most people arrive on dinghies launched by sub Saharan smugglers, but also some from the Greek coasts. 18 such incidents were reported in 2016 with small sailing boats landing on the coasts of eastern Sicily (710 people were concerned). In many cases, these were essentially transporting Syrians. Over the years, migratory flows have evolved and reflected international political situations, notably in Syria and Libya. Prosecutor Giordano indicated trying not to use detentional custody. He also reported the difficulty to gather evidence, also hampered by the frequent transfers of third country nationals among the different reception facilities. In 2016, 3400 minors arrived, most of them UAMs (2,300).

Maria Francesca Pricoco, President of the tribunal for minors in Catania, explained that Augusta, Catania and Pozzallo are the ports which welcome the biggest numbers of unaccompanied minors in Italy, with 26,000 UAMs in 2016. The minors' tribunal of Catania dealt with about 40% of them. The issue of minors relates first and foremost to guardianship, not just at the moment of appointment but also with regard to the content of the support

provided and their integration. Migrant minors have a right not just to international protection, but also to individual protection as children. The situation of these children pointed to the need for a law to recognise these rights, to come up with legal rules and procedures to enable minors to receive full recognition of their rights. The new law provides for a clear definition of the judicial procedure. In addition, new institutional guidelines need to be set up to include administrative procedures for minors when they arrive, to ensure cooperation between all authorities, police and judicial in particular. Also important in the new law: the right to be heard is recognised as a fundamental right for minors. With regard to the Dublin Regulation currently in force, Ms Pricoco noted that UAMs who arrive in Italy and have family in another EU Member State have a right to be transferred. However her tribunal noted difficulties here and often in practice this right cannot be respected. This was confirmed by Carla Santocono, Deputy Public prosecutor for minors. It was explained that action is needed here to accelerated the relevant procedures, including from the EU legislators. A right institutional set-up is needed for such minors to find and join family members in other countries. Possibilities under the legislation for adoption are also explored to find solutions, so that distant family members can act as guardians. At the moment, work is being done with the International Red Cross and Save the children.

During the question-time Ms Pricoco further elaborated on the situation of unaccompanied children reaching the age of 18. She explained that UAMs need to establish a plan or a project when they are still under 18, then they get a residence permit when they complete the plan. If they don't stick to the plan, then they stop getting help, 6 months after turning 18. Minors' tribunals try to avoid reaching this situation, for instance by ensuring a better accompanying role of the guardian. They try to appoint natural persons as guardians and entrust them with a limited number of children, even though in some situations mayors have to be in charge of several children.

Giovanni di Pietro, President of the first section of the Civil tribunal in Catania explained that at the moment, seven thousands appeals are pending before this court against first rejections of asylum applications. Three thousand new appeals were only brought last year. This is the consequence of strict jurisdiction rules, given the high numbers of arrivals and the size of the reception centre in Mineo. The court has introduced a streamlined system with online application and electronic transfer of files, information on the state of play of files. This facilitates the exchange of information in order to determine status, as judges had to update themselves notably on country of origin information. Efforts are being pursued to get additional staff as the current pace of 1200 decisions per year is insufficient. Further, the court deals also with family law and contract law. Specialised units are to be set up under the new Minniti-Orlando law-decree in August to deal exclusively with international protection issues but budgetary reinforcement remains a question mark. As for the recent law on guardianship for UAMs, it requires the appointment of a guardian by first level court (first section). Further, President di Pietro referred to the strengthened collegial aspect of asylum proceedings which is positive on the content but risks to lengthen proceedings.

Viviana di Gesu, Magistrate to the first civil section of the tribunal of Catania explained difficulties related to the appeal procedure, which suspends the deportation procedure. Communications are now facilitated, as email may be used for notifications. Hearings are not always attended by the applicants, who do not have an obligation to turn up. Problems of interpretation also arise as relevant funding is not always available. Generally speaking,, resources are very stretched.

Prefect Riccio and General Prosecutor Scalia confirmed this problem of resources which touches the judiciary but is general for all public administration on the island. They did not get any new resources to deal with the increased arrivals of third country nationals and the same administrations have to carry out more tasks.

In a separate and subsequent meeting, the content of which was requested to be kept confidential, Prosecutor Zuccaro further explained the work carried out with his two colleagues Deputy prosecutors Lina Trovato and Andrea Bonomo to fight smuggling and trafficking related to migration.

Dinner with Enzo Bianco, Mayor of Catania

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

This informal dinner with Mayor Bianco, an experienced local politician who is also a former Minister of Interior, gave an opportunity to further exchange, just after the meeting with Prosecutor Zuccaro, on the complexities of search and rescue in the area and the role of some NGOs intervening on high waters close to Libya. The contribution of private citizens was also evoked, a valuable expression of solidarity deployed on voluntary basis. Mayor Bianco insisted that this does make a difference. The importance of fighting the public opinion battle across Europe was also discussed. MEPs and the Mayor discussed that significant segments of the population overreact and perceive migration as a threat both to national identities and social welfare. However, the actual numbers of migrants are very low when compared to the overall EU population. This was clearly identified by everyone at the table as a key battle to be fought.

20 April 2017 – Augusta Pozzallo Catania

Visit of the harbour in Augusta, accompanied by Prefect of Syracuse, Giuseppe Castaldo, together with Deputy Prefect Caterina Minutoli, responsible for the Immigration office of the Prefecture of Syracuse, and the Mayor of Augusta, Maria Concetta di Pietro.

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

The delegation was welcomed by the Prefect of Syracuse, Giuseppe Castaldo, together with Deputy Prefect Caterina Minutoli, responsible for the Immigration office of the Prefecture of Syracuse, and the new Director of the Port Authority. It first received a briefing in the premises of the Port Authority on the activities carried out by the relevant authorities upon disembarkation (Standard Operating Procedures - SOPs), and identification procedures.

It was recalled that, since 2012, the port of Augusta has proceeded with many

disembarkations¹. Although the zone is not a hotspot as such, hotspot SOPs are applied here. Activities are governed by protocols, which set out different activities and players involved in disembarkation. 440 third country nationals were disembarked the day before the visit. After providing first aid, it is necessary to find structures where people can be received. The Italian government concluded an agreement in December 2016 with the National association of Italian municipalities (ANCI), to ensure a proportional distribution of migrants throughout the whole country, correlated to the population. This aims to a better model of evenly spread reception in order to ensure integration. It is based on a principle of proportionality (size of the municipality), some voluntary element (the population has to agree) and economic incentives proposed by the government. Mayors are also key players in this system which tends to reconcile solidarity and security, working hard on a daily basis for post-arrival activities.

This was further explained by the Mayor of Augusta, Maria Concetta di Pietro. She confirmed the high numbers of arrivals and the situation of Augusta as a top ranking disembarkation port, having received more than 9,200 migrants and refugees since the beginning of 2017². The port has a capacity of hosting 600 persons, while separate tents are set up for UAMs and single women. The city counts only 36,000 inhabitants, therefore arrivals have a huge impact on the locality. Municipalities involved in disembarkation have to bear very high costs. She mentioned that Augusta had to spend EUR 800,000 last year just for hot and cold meals. With regard to the plan signed between the government and ANCI, she clarified that economic incentives proposed by the government consist mainly in lifting the ban to recruitment of new personnel in the public sector for those municipalities which accept to receive asylum seekers. However, this cannot apply to her municipality which is highly indebted and cannot afford any recruitment. Also, she pointed to the fact that proportionality is taken into account only at the level of second reception. She stressed differences between local authorities where there are arrivals and hotspots. Hotspots are located in places where there are fewer disembarkations. In Augusta, reception services also improved since Mare Nostrum. A unique first aid centre was developed. People stay in the harbour for a short period of time. The number of UAMs is on the rise while structures to house them throughout Sicily are lacking. She recalled that last summer, 60 minors have been accommodated in tents for a too long period. She viewed the new law as a positive framework to tackle this, although consequent government structures still need to be set up.

The representative from the police authority explained that the Questura deploys forces of law and order in the port area, with Carabinieri and Guardia di finanza and presented the disembarkation procedures. As a disembarkation takes place, a navy health unit gets on board and proceeds with obligatory health screening on the ship. Then, the actual disembarkation procedure begins by groups of 50 persons. Further medical screening are being carried out with the Red Cross and local medical teams, just after disembarkation, and people are treated immediately under WHO rules and transferred to hospitals where needed. Many suffer from torture injuries. As people disembark they are given an information leaflet notably by UNHCR, and taken to the relevant structures for pre-identification, where photographs and fingerprints are taken. Later, further information is provided on international protection and

¹ See official figures provided by the Mayor of Augusta during the visit:

http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_19_aprile_2017.pdf

² idem

on relocation. Intercultural mediators and associations assist with interviews. Frontex specialised staff also intervene here. Fingerprinting requires the presence of law enforcement forces. Minors above 14 years of age are also fingerprinted. Cultural mediators and Frontex play a very important role here for age assessment with the help of relevant NGOs such as Save the Children. Specific reception procedures are applied to women who have experienced violence, notably followed up by the IOM. If offences were committed, they need to be investigated and are therefore reported. Vulnerabilities are defined, according to the EU Directive on reception conditions as transposed by the law decree no 352 of 2015 (e.g. minors, seriously ill, elderly, single women etc.) and the processing of the cases of vulnerable persons is prioritised. There has been an increase in cases of sexual violence and exploitation, while high numbers suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

When all this is completed, transfers are organised to accommodate people across Italy. Allocation plans are agreed with the prefecture and the central directorate of the Ministry of Interior. Out of the 440 people that had arrived the day before the visit, 200 had already been transferred to other Italian regions. A few people were still hosted in the harbour and the others were sent to reception centres throughout Italy. Seven bodies found on board were also to be taken to Syracuse cemetery, as burials also have to be organised and raise problems due to high numbers of deaths. Most casualties are the result of shipwrecks, but also of suffocating due to bad conditions on ships.

During the question time, the issue of current investigation on some NGOs suspected of being involved in smuggling activities was raised and received the answer that at the moment, hypotheses need to be checked as there is till today no evidence. A project carried out by the Navy for the recovery of bodies was also evoked, concerning people who passed away as a result of events prior to search and rescue. A database held by Lapano University in Milan contained all the personal information and belongings related to the recovered bodies. Questions were also asked on arrivals from Libya and relations with the government. Representatives of Italian authorities pointed to a role here, to help with the stabilisation of Libya.

To conclude, Prefect Castaldo recalled the position of the Italian government which is that migration needs to be managed in a holistic manner. He referred to the agreement with Libya and the development of relations with this country as a possible solution. Italy in any case has a duty to rescue people and will pursue its policy to save lives to which the whole government is committed. Managing migration is complex and requires the involvement of several levels and responsible actors. Volunteers and the population in general also make a major contribution. The Prefect said that solidarity will continue to be expressed.

After the briefing, the delegation could go around the area of the harbour and visit assistance and reception tents and units (for identification, health controls), and discuss with representatives of Frontex, UNHCR, IOM, NGOs (Emergency, Save the Children), Civil Protection volunteers as well as with asylum seekers and migrants waiting for being transferred. Some members of the delegation witnessed also the division with the area of tents by nationalities with people including minors identified by Frontex as Tunisians and Moroccans being in two separate tents, not being allowed to leave the tents but to go to the bathroom with a police officer. Exchanges with the team of Emergency pointed out to important mental health issues linked to the situation people were victims of in Libya such as

rape, torture or forced labour. It was pointed out that many single women arrive pregnant or with small babies that were the result of rape.

Lunch with NGOs/IGOs - UNHCR, Terre des Hommes, MSF, Emergency, MEDU, Save the children, in the village of Pozzallo

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

The delegation had the opportunity to engage in an informal discussion with representatives of organisations (UNHCR and NGOs) active in the hotspot of Pozzallo, preparing for the following visit of the hotspot itself.

Visit hotspot in Pozzallo

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Branislav Škripek (ECR), Jaromír Štětina (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

The delegation was here again provided with figures of arrivals of third country nationals in recent years in Pozzallo: around 28,000 in 2014, 16,000 in 2015, 19,000 and so far 4,000 in 2017. For UAMs, numbers have increased significantly. People have started arriving in the province in high numbers since the 1990s. The focus has changed over the years, new requirements have been introduced with regards to registration, security and health. This produced a flexible organisational model. The maritime health office carries out checks on board, then on the docks, security screenings are carried out as well, then NGOs do a lot of the work - MSF, Terre des Hommes, MEDU (doctors for human rights), Emergency. They carry out careful health screening. During the pre-identification procedure, an initial screening can allow to identify situations that require immediate care, e.g. pregnant women, migrants suffering from conditions that need to be treated immediately. Vulnerabilities can also be identified then, e.g. girls victims of trafficking, UAMs. Targeted interventions take place then via IGOs/NGOs (IOM for victims of trafficking, Save the children for minors) further checks follow within hotspots, in cooperation with Emergency.

Regarding unaccompanied minors, it was explained that guardianship is often given to the Mayor while there are not always appropriate structures in the municipalities. With the new law, prefects will now have the remits to set centres for UAMs. In the area, 250 UAMs are hosted in four centres and another three will be established.

Prefect Librizzi concluded this general presentation by stressing that the system enables authorities to deal, with great sacrifices, with people who arrive at any time, including during holidays. The organisational model is appropriate to deal with landings at any time. She recalled and stressed that the hotspot is based in a centre that began as an initial reception centre. It had to adapt to new realities, such as the need to host many organisations.

The Mayor of Pozzallo insisted on the engagement of the local population in the whole process and their welcoming attitude. He took pride in his community succeeding in receiving people and giving them back their dignity.

Questore Giuseppe Gammino recalled that the area already has a high percentage of foreigners (28%). The hotspot is a place for first reception and immediate transfer after arrival at this point, i.e. a place where people are not supposed to remain. Authorities try to transfer people as fast as possible to other places in Italy. This involves cooperation at all levels. He insisted on the need to carry out search and rescue operations. It is important for police work that the relevant vessels keep track and transfer information on the different search and rescue events, so as for authorities to be better prepared for the disembarkations and in order follow up on each of them. Ships should not simply disembark masses of people, without having informed the authorities about the boats the migrants were on prior to the rescue operation. Emergency care is of course the priority, especially in the case of minors. The police remains in the margins at that stage. Authorities carry out pre-identification, collect spontaneous explanations, pictures, fingerprinting. Data is imported into connected IT systems. Then they proceed with the real identification stage. This work is carried out together with Frontex, in a fruitful cooperation. Different services are involved: juvenile police, immigration office (second phase for data collection), investigation unit (arrests of smugglers, identification of possible subsequent stages). 100% of people transiting are identified through finger-printing (Eurodac). He acknowledged some instances of people who resisted such procedures in the past. He explained that the police tries to persuade them.

Regarding health aspects, Carmelo Lauretto, Director of the sanitary health unit of the hotspot explained that authorities ensure that all pregnant women are sent to a specialist. They check if people need to be sent to hospital, through a full medical check (taking temperature, medical details etc.) as it would be done for the Italian population. Most frequent conditions are related to scabies. This is often the result of conditions of detention in Libya, it is therefore more common among sub-Saharan Africans, rather than people from Syria. Few cases of TB have been noted. Other health issues include psychological problems, HIV (not many), bilharzia and measles. Giuseppina Pignatello further explained that actions are taken to prevent entry of diseases in Europe. Health screenings are preferably carried out on board, because boats are closed areas. Information is exchanged before the arrival through phone calls and via networks. This can facilitate for instance the preparation of the right kind of ambulance on land when the vessel arrives. Suspected cases may lead to possible quarantine. High fevers or conditions which are not emergencies are referred to local health capacity. Staff have been reinforced throughout the years, to be able to do things properly and quickly, depending on conditions and situation.

Members of the delegation were taken around the path that disembarked third country nationals have to follow upon arrival. After having arrived on the docks and received initial care, having undergone the initial security screening, and after initial information on asylum is provided by UNHCR staff, people are taken by bus to the premises of the hotspot. A second security check is undertaken, for instance by screening mobile phones (this can provide important information for further investigations on smuggling). People then go through a corridor where they are requested to provide information (e.g. on family members, nationality, etc.) to representatives of the Italian immigration office, assisted by cultural mediators, EASO and Frontex. They receive information and are then asked about their intentions with regard to requesting international protection. Documentation is checked and vulnerability issues are to be flagged then. After this corridor, people go through a second health screening. They receive a sanitary kit, which includes some basic clothes, while their own clothes are destroyed, a 15-Euro telephone card and are explained the rules applying in the centre. Then people are requested to shower and directed to dormitories, in one of the

three different areas of accommodation - for men, women and children. It is not always possible to divide men, women and children. 4000 UAMs have gone through the centre in the last three years.

It was explained that sanitary installations have recently been refurbished. Still, the numbers of showers and toilets appears insufficient for the whole hosting capacity of the centre (250) which is often exceeded. This was for instance the case the day before the visit. People go through forensic identification and fingerprinting afterwards. Data is checked against Eurodac. During the operations, staff have to wear masks, protecting them against contagious diseases. At the moment, many arriving asylum seekers have scabies. After having gone through this process, people are redistributed throughout Italy according to the redistribution plan established by the prefect. UAMs have to be transferred to relevant facilities within a couple of days.

During the visit, the delegation had also the opportunity to discuss and receive explanations from representatives of European agencies active in the hotspot, notably EASO (and Member States' deployed experts) and FRONTEX, Italian Asylum Service caseworkers, UNHCR, IOM, Save The Children, the Italian Red Cross, Emergency, MEDU, Terre des Hommes. IOM pointed out the difficulties in ensuring protection to victims of trafficking due to the fears of identifying themselves as such and even if they would so, as in the case of three women present in the centre at the time of the visit, the insufficient numbers of places in shelters for victims of trafficking.

21 April 2017

Meeting at EURTF with EU agencies

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (PPE), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

The delegation was presented with briefings by the European Commission, EASO, Europol and Frontex, thus given an opportunity to put into perspective the observations that Members could make during the previous days of the visit.

Giovanni Cioffi from the European Commission reminded participants of general information provided during the pre-departure briefing, giving figures of arrivals, stressing the objectives of hotspots and the hotspot approach and the role of the Commission in the whole process. He then explained the particular coordination role exercised through the EURTF which is to bridge sea and land operations and bring together Italian and EU actors.

The representative of EASO Gabriel Stanescu recalled the Hotspot Relocation Operating Plan signed between the organisation and Italy, which led to the deployment of 170 experts in 2016. On 18 April there were 58 EASO experts and 48 cultural mediators on the ground. The second phase of the Special support plan was implemented, with capacity building for the National Asylum Commission and activities on country of origin information, capacity building for first instance decision makers and judges, and support on the reception and Dublin procedures. As for the Operating Plan to Italy signed on 22 December 2016, it includes measures to support: providing information for potential applicants (relocation cases); pre-identification of potential Dublin cases upon arrival; registration (Dublin and relocation cases); handling outgoing Dublin 'take charge' requests; strengthening reception

capacity, especially for unaccompanied minors; professional development of the staff of Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration and activities in the field of country of origin information.

Miguel Nicolau, from the Frontex Joint Operations Unit, supplemented information provided during the pre-departure briefing on the Agency's contribution to the Joint Operation Triton and to the Hotspots approach. At sea, the "Operational concept" of Triton consists in providing border surveillance, contributing to search and rescue and participating in multipurpose operations. After disembarkation, the focus is on identification (screening); referral; registration (fingerprinting); security checks and the collection of information via debriefing activities. With regard to hotspots, the key messages are to reinforce the support to local authorities after disembarkation; to assist with identification, fingerprinting, registration of all irregular migrants arriving; to check against national and other databases, to help with standardisation of procedures in full respect of fundamental rights of the migrants; to collect crime-related information and evidence, to exchange data with Europol, Eurojust and Interpol, in an enhanced contribution to the fight against terrorism, cross-border crime and terrorism-related threats.

EUROPOL's European Migrant Smuggling Centre based at the EURTF in Catania was then presented by Roberto Dannunzio. Its main activities consist in providing support to Italian authorities in investigations on migrant smuggling and organised crime groups with international links. They participate in debriefings jointly with other EU Agencies when required by Frontex and/or Italian authorities, and international connections are detected. They support international cooperation and information sharing, liaise with local law enforcement authorities, exchange information with EU Agencies and relevant partners and cross-check the data from interviews and investigations, provide forensic support when requested by Italian authorities in line with the national legal framework.

Press Conference

Participants: Barbara Kudrycka (EPP, Head of delegation), Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D), Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), Salvatore Domenico Pogliese (PPE) - MEPs

The press conference was kindly hosted by the Municipality of Catania, in its premises in the centre of the city. A collection of media coverage can be found below (Annex III).

V. Conclusions and recommendations

The numerous visits and exchanges during the mission were considered extremely useful for Members in understanding the current situation of refugees in Italy as well as the contributions of the various actors.

The Members participating in the mission:

- would like to express their gratitude to the Italian government, the UNHCR, EU agencies, local authorities in Catania, Augusta and Pozzallo, non-governmental organisations, volunteers and the EP Office in Rome who contributed constructively to the delegation visit and enhanced the understanding of the challenges faced with the increased arrivals by sea in Italy;
- recognise the difficult situation in Italy with receiving, registering and processing a

high number of refugees and migrants, which are subsequently hosted by Italy; Italy is currently one of the biggest entry points of Europe, therefore the current migration situation is a European, not just an Italian issue;

- were impressed and pay tribute to the efforts of the Italian authorities, population, and all stakeholders, specifically in Sicily, to ensure that the fundamental rights of all migrants and refugees are respected and best processing practices, including for registering arriving migrants and ensuring the protection of external borders, are observed by all stakeholders. The efforts to save lives at sea through search and rescue while fighting against smuggling and trafficking of human beings are tremendous. This is all the more important given the increasing instability and worrying situation in neighbouring countries, notably Libya;
- could also observe good cooperation between Italian authorities, NGOs, and EU agencies, and noted the valuable support of EASO, Frontex and Europol;
- see the new legislation on unaccompanied minors as a step in the right direction, very much needed given the arrivals of ever higher figures of minors of ever lower age among which increasing numbers of trafficking victims; and
- realised that many authorities, including local authorities but also the judiciary, are facing important limitations as far as financial and human resources are concerned, recognising that Italy shoulders a greater relative task in dealing with the migration situation.

Moreover, the delegation found that observations and findings from the visit are very relevant to the current work of the European Parliament for revising EU asylum legislation, in particular the Dublin Regulation, and made the following recommendations:

- It is evident that the current Dublin Regulation does not work and urgently needs to be reformed;
- In the hotspots and the hotspot SOPs, identification of vulnerabilities and tracing of family links have to be improved so that the rights to special treatment and the right to family life and to be transferred consequently, are effective and respected in practice;
- The protection of minors has to be reinforced and for UAMs in particular with regard to guardianship. Migrant children need to be treated as children first and as such, to receive the protection they are entitled to;
- Relocation of asylum seekers to other Member States needs to be implemented swiftly as agreed in order to demonstrate solidarity in practice, with particular attention to vulnerable groups who shall be relocated faster;
- The need for large scale search and rescue operations demonstrates that Europe must create safe and lawful routes for migration. Resettlement in particular needs to be reinforced.
- The protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, particularly women victims of sexual exploitation, should be enhanced, notably by increasing the places in shelters for victims of trafficking in human beings.

Members concluded that what Italy is dealing with should be a wake-up call to Europe for a more collective response and fairer sharing of responsibility.

Annex I - Final programme



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ПАРЛАМЕНТ PARLAMENTO EUROPEO EVROPSKÝ PARLAMENT EUROPA-PARLAMENTET
EUROPÄISCHES PARLAMENT EUROOPA PARLAMENT ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΚΟΙΝΟΒΟΥΛΙΟ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN PARLAIMINT NA HEORPA PARLAMENTO EUROPEO EIROPAS PARLAMENTS
EUROPOS PARLAMENTAS EURÓPAI PARLAMENT IL-PARLAMENT EWROPEW EUROPEES PARLEMENT
PARLAMENT EUROPEJSKI PARLAMENTO EUROPEU PARLAMENTUL EUROPEAN
EURÓPSKY PARLAMENT EVROPSKI PARLAMENT EUROOPAN PARLAMENTTI EUROPAPARLAMENTET

European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Mission on Migration and asylum

Italy, 18 - 21 April 2017

Programme

Tuesday, 18 April 2017

Arrival in Rome (Fiumicino airport) by 13.30 at the latest

(Suggested flight (Alitalia): departure from Brussels National Airport at 11.25)

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 13.30 – 14.30 | Transfer from Rome Fiumicino airport to the International Coordination Center for search and rescue (<i>Aeroporto militare di Pratica di Mare, Via Pratica di Mare, 45, 00071 Pomezia</i>) |
| 14.30 | Visit of the International Coordination Centre (ICC) for the Joint FRONTEX/EBCGA Operation TRITON (Practica di Mare) |
| 16.30 - 17.30 | Transfer from the International Coordination Center to hotel (<i>Hotel Villa Maria Regina, Via della Camiluccia 687 - 00135 Rome</i>) |
| 18:00 - 18:45 | Meetings at hotel venue with UNHCR, IOM, ASGI (<i>Associazione per gli studi giuridici sull'immigrazione</i>) and ARCI (Tavolo Asilo) |
| 18:45 - 19:30 | Meetings at hotel venue with institutional representatives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Federico Gelli, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee of inquiry on the reception and detention system for migrants• Mr Erasmo Palazzotto, Member of the Parliamentary Committee of inquiry on the reception and detention system for migrants• Senate Committee for the promotion of Human Rights (<i>Chairperson and/or other Member tbc</i>)• Mr Mauro Palma, Ombudsman for the rights of detained persons• Ms Filomena Albano, Ombudsman for children and youth |

20.30 Dinner with Undersecretary of State to the Ministry of Interior Domenico Manzione and Deputy Prefect Simona Spinelli (Head of the Dublin Unit) at *Hotel Villa Maria Regina*

Wednesday, 19 April 2017

8.15 - 9.15 Transfer from hotel to reception center (CARA) of Castelnuovo di Porto

9.15 - 11.15 Visit of the reception center (CARA) Castelnuovo di Porto, accompanied by Deputy Prefect Roberto Leone

11.15 - 12.45 Transfer from reception-relocation center Castelnuovo di Porto to Rome Fiumicino airport

14.40 Flight to Catania

16.05 Arrival in Catania and transfer to Prefecture

17.00 - 18.00 Meeting at Prefecture with Prefect Silvana Riccio, Questore Giuseppe Gualtieri, Provincial Commander of Carabinieri Francesco Gargaro, Provincial Commander of Guardia di Finanza Roberto Manna, and Prosecutor Carmelo Zuccaro together with Substitute Prosecutors Andrea Bonomo and Lina Trovato (*anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking pool of prosecutors*)
(Contact: Deputy Prefect Domenico Fichera)

18.00 - 18.30 Transfer to hotel (*Hotel Mercure Catania Excelsior*, 39 Piazza Giovanni Verga, 95129 Catania)

19.00 - 20.00 Meeting on migrant children with Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, Comunità Sant'Egidio (*tbc*), UNHCR and Catania Municipality

20.30 Dinner with Enzo Bianco, Mayor of Catania, at *Hotel Mercure Catania Excelsior*

Thursday, 20 April 2017

8.45 - 10.00 Transfer by bus from Catania to Augusta

10.00 - 12.00 Visit harbour in Augusta, accompanied by Prefect of Syracuse, Giuseppe Castaldo, together with Deputy Prefect Caterina Minutoli, responsible for the Immigration office of the Prefecture of Syracuse.

During the meeting, the delegation will have a briefing (in the rooms of the Harbor Authority) on the activities carried out by the relevant authorities upon disembarkation (Standard Operating Procedures - SOPs, and identification procedures) followed by a visit of the area of the harbor used for the assistance to migrants.

Representatives of the following authorities and bodies will be present: Questura, Navy, "Capitaneria di Porto", USMAF, ASP, Regional Department of Civil Protection, Harbor Authority of Augusta, Municipality of Augusta, FRONTEX, Emergency, UNHCR, Save the Children, IOM, Civil Protection volunteers.

12.00 - 13.00 Transfer by bus to Pozzallo

13.00 - 15.00 Lunch with NGOs/IGOs - IOM, UNHCR, Terre des Hommes, MSF, Emergency, MEDU, Oxfam, Save the children, at *Restaurant Sabbenerica (6 Via Tevere, Pozzallo)*

15.00 - 17.30 Visit hotspot in Pozzallo

Visit to start with briefing at meeting room of the "Capitaneria di porto" - in the presence of Prefect Maria Carmela Librizzi (Prefect of Ragusa), Questore Giuseppe Gammino, Mayor Luigi Ammatuna (Mayor of Pozzallo), Commander of "Capitaneria di Porto" Andrea Zanghì, as well as Director of "Azienda Sanitaria" and disembarkation coordinator doctor, Director USMAF, Civil Protection responsible, Hotspot director, and representatives of:
European agencies active in the hotspot, notably EASO (and Member States' deployed experts), FRONTEX;
Italian Asylum Service caseworkers;
UNHCR, IOM, Save The Children, Italian Red Cross, Emergency, MEDU, Terre des Hommes.

17.30 - 19.00 Transfer back to Catania

Free dinner

Friday, 21 April 2017

8.30 - 9.00 Transfer by bus from hotel to European Regional Task Force (EURTF) in Catania

9.00 - 10:30 European Regional Task Force (EURTF) in Catania (address: Via Transito, 74, 95121 Catania) - Meeting with EU agencies

10.45 - 11.45 Press conference

11.45 Transfer to the airport in Catania

14.05 Flight from Catania to Brussels (arrival at 19.10)

Individual Return on 21 April

SECRETARIAT CONTACTS	
Céline CHATEAU Administrator	Tel. (00 32 2) 28-30960 celine.chateau@europarl.europa.eu
Danai Papadopoulou Administrator	Tel. (00 32 2) 28-42413 danai.papadopoulou@europarl.europa.eu
Vita GRIFITA Assistant	Tel. (00 32 2) 28-44943 vita.grifita@europarl.europa.eu
EPIO Rome CONTACTS	
MENEIGHINI Gianpaolo Head of EPIO Rome	Tel. (00 39) 338 572 7295 gianpaolo.menighini@ep.europa.eu

Annex II - Final list of participants

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Mission to Italy 18 – 21 April 2017

List of participants

MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (protocol order)

	Name	Group ¹	Full Member/ Substitute	Country
1	Barbara KUDRYCKA <i>Vice-Chair of the LIBE Committee</i> (Head of the Delegation 20/04 afternoon - 21/04)	EPP	F	PL
2	Juan Fernando LÓPEZ AGUILAR (Head of the Delegation from 18/04 - 20/04 afternoon)	S&D	F	ES
3	Branislav ŠKRIPEK	ECR	F	SK
4	Jaromír ŠTĚTINA	EPP	S	CZ
5	Miltiadis KYRKOS	S&D	S	GR
6	Anna Maria CORAZZA BILDT	EPP	S	SE
7	Morten Helveg PETERSEN	ALDE	S	DK

ACCOMPANYING MEMBERS (out of quota)

8	Alessandra MUSSOLINI	EPP	F	IT
9	Cécile Kashetu KYENGE	S&D	F	IT
10	Barbara SPINELLI	GUE/NGL	S	IT
11	Salvatore Domenico POGLIESE	EPP	S	IT

¹ EPP Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
S&D Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
ECR European Conservatives and Reformists Group
ALDE Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
GUE/NGL European United Left - Nordic Green Left

STAFF OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS

	Name	Group
12	Elisabetta MONTANO	EPP
13	Shane MURPHY	S&D
14	Paul MOYNAN	ECR
15	Tom FEELEY	ALDE
16	Amandine BACH	GUE/NGL

STAFF OF THE EP SECRETARIAT

	Name	Function
17	Danai PAPADOPOULOU	Administrator
18	Céline CHATEAU	Administrator
19	Vita GRIFITA	Assistant

INTERPRETATION

	Name	Language
20	Piergiorgio GINEFRA (TEAM LEADER)	IT
21	Roberto AQUINO	IT
22	Catherine LIPPA	EN
23	Reuben IMRAY	EN
24	Grzegorz KOWALEWSKI	PL
25	Agnieszka GADZINSKA	PL
26	Dagmara WROBEL	PL
27	Peter BOGHE	Technician

STAFF OF THE EP OFFICE ROME

28	MENEGHINI Gianpaolo	Head of EPIO Rome
29	MOLINARI Maurizio	Press Officer EPIO Rome
30	CATERINI Laura	Assistant EPIO Rome

Annex III - Web and Audiovisual review

TG RAI TGR Sicilia

<http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/TGR/basic/PublishingBlock-f9fb1cb6-573a-4018-9d55-e41a181ae733-archivio.html>

20/04/2017 h.14.00 min. 01.00-03.05

20/04/2017 h.19.30 min. 03.23-05.27

21/04/2017 h.14.00 min. 08.12-09.57

WEB SOURCES

15 April

<http://www.aise.it/ue/-migrazione-e-asilo-delegazione-del-parlamento-europeo-a-roma-e-in-sicilia/85876/157>

17 April

<http://www.controlacrisi.org/notizia/Altro/2017/4/17/49252-migranti-i-parlamentari-europei-da-domani-in-visita-a-roma/>

18 April

<http://www.hashtagsicilia.it/cronaca/cronaca-di-catania/commissione-europea-sui-migranti-catania-augusta-pozzallo-15006>

<http://retenews2puntozero.it/18-21-aprile-2017-migrazione-e-asilo-delegazione-parlamento-europeo-a-roma-e-in-sicilia/>

<http://www.laprovinciadelsulcisiglesiente.com/wordpress/2017/04/da-oggi-a-venerdi-21-aprile-una-delegazione-del-parlamento-europeo-a-roma-e-in-sicilia-per-affrontare-lemergenza-migranti-e-richiedenti-asilo/>

<http://www.romadaleggere.it/europarlamentari-a-roma-per-i-migranti/>

20 April

<http://www.lasiciliaweb.it/articolo/149638/sicilia/solo-il-5-dei-migranti-sono-rifugiati>

<http://www.lastampa.it/2017/04/20/italia/cronache/il-governo-sbarchi-record-non-casuali-una-regia-guida-i-migranti-in-mare-zlW9mSHMJLk3mSpGBhgKtN/pagina.html>

21 April

<http://www.direttanews24.com/solo-il-5-dei-migranti-sono-rifugiati-kyenge-esportare-modello-di-accoglienza-italiano-in-europa/>

<http://www.ultimatv.it/2017/04/21/delegazione-eurodeputati-catania-parlare-immigrazione/>

http://catania.livesicilia.it/2017/04/21/ue-commissione-libe-visita-sede-frontex-catania_414574/

<http://www.economiasicilia.com/2017/04/21/immigrazione-commissione-libe-italia-sicilia-mostrano-risposta-ue/>

<https://www.nuovosud.it/55435-cronaca-catania/migranti-eurodeputati-catania-bene-laccoglienza-ma-lue-agisca>

<http://www.cataniatoday.it/cronaca/migrazione-e-asilo-eurodeputati-a-catania-per-fare-il-punto-sul-flusso-migratorio.html>

<http://www.valledaostaglocal.it/2017/04/21/leggi-notizia/argomenti/attualita-politica/articolo/migrazione-e-asilo-eurodeputati-italia-e-sicilia-mostrano-la-via-per-risposta-collettiva-ue.html>

22 April

<http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/annalisa-camilli/2017/04/22/ong-criminalizzazione-mediterraneo>

23 April

<http://www.lastampa.it/2017/04/23/italia/cronache/abbiamo-le-prove-dei-contatti-tra-scafisti-e-alcuni-soccorritori-3fCnqLKWWRHBVUiHgHv65K/pagina.html>

AUDIOVISUAL

Migranti: Parlamento UE in missione in Italia

Rai 3 - 19 Apr 2017 - [Video Broadcast Time 01:00, Duration 1]

La Commissione Libertà Civili dell'Europarlamento ha iniziato oggi la sua missione in Italia per fare il punto sulla situazione dei migranti. Gli europarlamentari Cecile Kyenge (S&D, IT), Alessandra Mussolini (EPP, IT) e Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL, IT) sono stati intervistati dal Tg3. Per Kyenge "il problema è sempre più grave e il nostro obiettivo è arrivare comunque a una politica comune a livello Europeo". Mussolini sottolinea che "sono le navi delle associazioni non profit che prendono i migranti nelle acque libiche e li portano qui". "Sono molti di più quelli che muoiono prima di arrivare nel Mediterraneo", dice Spinelli.

Il Parlamento Europeo visita i centri di accoglienza Italiani

Tgcom - 19 Apr 2017 - Web

Gli europarlamentari Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar (S&D, IT) Cecile Kyenge (S&D, IT) e Alessandra Mussolini (EPP, IT) hanno visitato i centri di accoglienza profughi in Italia. Aguilar ha sottolineato che la gestione dei migranti "è un grosso fallimento, per la mancata volontà degli Stati Membri, soprattutto di alcuni Stati Membri, mentre bisogna riconoscere all'Italia il merito di essere in prima linea per far fronte all'emergenza". La Kyenge ha ribadito che sono molte le persone "in attesa del proprio futuro". Infine, Mussolini ha ribadito la necessità di "regole chiare, tempi brevi e allargamento della famiglia per i ricongiungimenti"