



Presentation to EMN on 15 December 2016 by

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**The Operational Response to the Refugee  
Crisis: The Role of the Refugee Applications  
Commissioner and the European Asylum  
Support Office**



European Asylum Support Office

**SUPPORT IS OUR MISSION**

# Key Elements of Presentation

- 1. Introductory Points**
- 2. EU Relocation: Progress and Challenges**
- 3. EU Relocation and Ireland**
- 4. The ORAC Process and Relocation**
- 5. The work of the European Asylum Support Office**
- 6. EASO and EU Relocation Programme**
- 7. International Protection Act 2015**
- 8. Questions?**

# 1. Introductory Points

## ORAC

- **Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC)**
  - Statutory office established in 2000
  - Applications for international protection (refugee and subsidiary protection)
  - Family reunification for persons with refugee status
- Inputting into domestic and EU asylum policy
- Supporting the EU Relocation Programme
- 150 staff including Panel of legal graduates to process cases

# 1. Introductory Points

## International Protection Act 2015

From 31 December 2016:

- Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) abolished
- Transforming into the International Protection Office (IPO)
- Chief International Protection Officer      } Statutory independent
- International Protection Office            } functions

More details later

# 1. Introductory Points

## EU Migration Crisis 2015/2016 Overview

### Arrivals in Greece and Italy 2015

#### **Greece**

Arrivals in 2015: 857,363

Top 5 countries of origin 2015:

1. Syria
2. Afghanistan
3. Iraq
4. Pakistan
5. Iran

(Source: International Organisation for Migration)

#### **Italy**

Arrivals in 2015: 153,842

Top 5 countries of origin 2015:

1. Eritrea
2. Nigeria
3. Somalia
4. Sudan
5. Gambia

(Source: International Organisation for Migration)

# 1. Introductory Points

## Arrivals in Greece and Italy to 30 November 2016

Arrivals in **Greece**: 174,561

Arrivals in **Italy**: 173,188

Top countries of origin for arrivals in **Greece** and **Italy**:  
(January to November 2016)

- **Greece**: Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq
- **Italy**: Nigeria, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea

(Source: International Organisation for Migration)

## 2. EU Relocation: Progress and Challenges

### Legal Basis – EU Law

1. Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece.
2. Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece.
3. The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016.
4. 75% grant rate for a national of a country to be eligible (currently Bahrain; Bhutan; Burundi; Eritrea; Mozambique; Qatar; Syria; Yemen)

## 2. EU Relocation: Progress and Challenges

### Relocation in Numbers as of 30 November 2016

Numbers relocated from Greece:

6,123

(Source: IOM)

Numbers relocated from Italy:

1,890

(Source: IOM)



## 2. EU Relocation: Progress and Challenges

Number of pledges received from EU States.

For Greece 12,426

For Italy 5,289

(Source:EASO)

## 2. EU Relocation: Progress and Challenges

### Key Challenges

- Insufficient pledges
- Lengthy response times from States
- Transport delays
- Slow implementation of transfers
- Security checks - slow

### 3. EU Relocation and Ireland

**Irish Staff deployed to Greece and Italy under the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)  
– To support EU Relocation etc**

Functions:

- Meet migrants arriving on the Greek islands to inform them of Relocation and encourage them to apply.
- Perform vulnerability assessments of applicants (many were subject to torture and other traumatic events in Syria).
- Perform admissibility interviews to ascertain if valid asylum claims existed for admission to the Greek asylum process and possible subsequent relocation.

### 3. EU Relocation and Ireland (continued)

- Irish Refugee Protection Programme (2015)
- Multi Agency Approach
- Government commitment → 4,000 people to be accepted (Resettlement and Relocation)
- 2622 persons to be taken from Greece and Italy under Relocation
- 780 from Lebanon under Refugee Resettlement  
- 520(2016) 260 (2017)
- 507 resettlement arrivals by December 2016 (Iraqi and Syrian)

### 3. EU Relocation and Ireland (continued)

- Relocation → Accommodation in Emergency Reception Orientation Centres (EROCs)
- Support from various State Agencies
- Dedicated unit in ORAC overseeing Relocation Asylum Seekers
- Monthly missions headed by ORAC Liaison Officer
- Orientation interviews in Greece (Irish Staff)
- Security checks (by Gardaí)
- Asylum claims processed by ORAC

### 3. EU Relocation and Ireland (continued)

- Pledges will be made monthly until September 2017
- 325 people met in Greece to date by Irish officials
- A further 82 being met this week (w/c 12 December)
- Nationalities: Syrian and Iraqi
- 109 arrived to date
- A further 131 scheduled to arrive 16 December 2016
- Total arrivals for 2016 - 240

## 4. The ORAC Process and Relocation

In Greece

ORAC Liaison Officer delivers cultural orientation covering:

- Overview of Ireland (location, weather, population, culture);
- Practical information for leaving Greece;
- Information on what will happen on arrival in Ireland;
- Information about Ireland (rights & responsibilities, health & education services, food, types of clothes worn)

## 4. The ORAC Process and Relocation (continued)

In Dublin

- Registration of Protection Application in ORAC
- Fingerprinting
- Completion of questionnaire
- Protection interview at place of accommodation
- Protection Declaration/recommendation

[Transfer of case from Greece to Ireland under EU Dublin Regulation]



## 4. The ORAC Process and Relocation (continued)

To date (December 2016)

- 70 refugee status determinations have been made under the 1996 Act.
- 171 more to be processed in early 2017 under the 2015 Act (Single Procedure).

## 5. The work of the European Asylum Support Office

- EU Agency established in 2010 to act as a centre of excellence and support in asylum matters including practical co-operation between Member States.
  - **Permanent Support:** Quality of asylum process; common training programmes; common approaches to country of origin research
  - **Special Support:** Capacity building in Member States; tailor made assistance such as relocation and resettlement programmes.
  - **Emergency Support:** to MS with pressure on their protection processes.

## 5. The work of the European Asylum Support Office (continued)

- **Information and Analysis:** Trends, statistics, early warning reports, evidence based research for policymakers.
- **Third country support:** training and advice – non EU states.
- Supporting the EU Relocation Programme and EU Turkey Programme.

# 5. The work of the European Asylum Support Office (continued)

- **Training to Support Common EU Asylum Policy**
  - EU Asylum Caseworkers
  - EU Asylum Trainers
- **Practical Support Tools – such as**
  - Access to Asylum Procedures
  - Interview Techniques
  - Guidance Indicators on Reception Conditions
- **Courts and Tribunals - support**
  - Professional Development Support
- **Activities on Vulnerable Groups – such as**
  - Practical Guide on Family Tracing
  - Unaccompanied Minors

# 5. The work of the European Asylum Support Office (continued)

- **Support Networks for EU asylum Officials**
  - Dublin Process
  - Reception Process
  
- **Country of Origin Networks**
  - Research
  - Country Reports (Afghanistan (2), Somalia, Pakistan)
  - Training
  - Conferences
  
- **Statistics/Trends**
  
- **Operational Support**
  - Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania

## 6. EASO and EU Relocation Programme

### Operational Support

- Supporting hotspots in Italy and Greece
- Over 500 experts deployed from EU Member States (to date)
- Some 92 experts in Greece now, including 2 Irish
- Registration for Relocation Programme
- Admissibility processing for asylum applicants
- Vulnerability assessments
- Deploying interpreters

## 6. EASO and EU Relocation Programme

### EASO and Relocation - Challenges

- Security issues at hotspots
- Availability of national experts
- Ongoing review of processes

# 7. International Protection Act 2015

(which will impact on Relocation)

## Present system

- Changes in Refugee Act 1996 and ancillary legislation
- Multi-layered (First instance refugee decisions; Appeal; First instance subsidiary protection decisions; Appeal; Leave to Remain; Stay or go )

## Consequences

- Cases delayed
- Costly process



## 7. International Protection Act 2015 (continued)

### Key Elements

- Go Live 31 December 2016
- **Single Procedure** for all cases, including Relocation – all main grounds (refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain) to be processed together in new International Protection Office.
- Appeals to a new International Protection Appeals Tribunal (Protection only).
- New Office → the '**International Protection Office**' (IPO)
- Refugee Appeals Tribunal to be replaced by '**International Protection Appeals Tribunal**' (IPAT)

# 7. International Protection Act 2015

(Why introduce it?)

Provided resources are allocated to the IPO and IPAT –

- New procedure is more **efficient**
- **Speedier processing** of applications for International Protection
- Brings our system (single procedure) in line with other **EU Member States**
- Reduced time in Direct Provision for applicants and associated **costs to the State**
- Applicants receive clarity re their status earlier

Success hinges on **Adequate Resources** and **Quality Procedures**

# 8. Questions?