

Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS
Member of the European Commission

Brussels, 21 December 2016
Ares(2016)6036781

Dear Members of YoungCaritas in Europe,

I want to thank you for your letter of 20 October addressed to President Juncker which he has read with great interest. The President has asked me to reply to you on his behalf.

It gives me great pleasure to respond to a letter from young Europeans that have put their national perspective aside in order to present their assessment of migration policy, as one of this Commission's top 10 priorities, and do so from a European perspective. As the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, I can only agree with you that the current crisis has exposed structural weaknesses in our migration management system. However, I am also pleased to say that we reacted quickly with the adoption of our European Agenda on Migration (in May 2015) and the subsequent decisions and legislative proposals that followed.

As you are aware, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is based on a set of rules that *inter alia* determine 1) the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection, 2) set common standards for asylum procedures, 3) set minimum reception conditions and 4) set criteria for the recognition of a need for international protection. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) supports Members States in its technical and operational implementation.

As part of our political agenda, the Commission adopted a series of legislative proposals designed to comprehensively overhaul the CEAS in May and July of this year, so as to make it fit for current and future challenges. Our proposed reforms are designed to ensure that a reformed system is founded on two basic principles, solidarity and the taking of responsibility.

1./3

Young Caritas Luxembourg
B.P. 35
L- 5801 Hesperange
Luxembourg

info@youngcaritas.lu

Rue de la Loi 200 - B-1049 Brussels - Blvd. 12/78
Tel. +32 2 295 16 16 - e-mail: dimitris.avramopoulos@ec.europa.eu

With the above in mind, allow me to respond to your different points in turn:

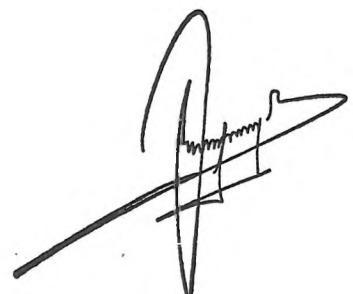
1. Our proposed comprehensive reform of CEAS would contribute to addressing the problems linked to irregular migration to Europe. However, a clear component of reducing irregular migration is providing safe and legal channels to Europe. To that end, the Commission has presented a proposal for an EU Resettlement Framework with a unified procedure for resettlement across the EU.
2. Our proposed reform of CEAS would strengthen the reception conditions directive wherein, *inter alia*, we propose to reduce the amount time it takes for applicants to access the labour market from nine to maximum six months in order to promote applicant's self-reliance. The strengthened directive will also ensure that reception conditions in Member States are more aligned with each other in order to prevent employment-driven asylum shopping.
3. In June of this year, the Commission came forward with Action Plan on Integration which comprises fifty actions to improve the integration of third country nationals residing legally in the EU. Integration is an important investment as the cost of non-integration is higher in economic and political terms. I am pleased that the Council has already adopted conclusions on taking our Action Plan forward.
4. Indeed voluntary work needs to be acknowledged and rewarded. It is worth noting that the Commission has recently launched the European Solidarity Corps, just two months after President Juncker announced it in his State of the Union Address. The initiative will provide invaluable experience for young Europeans at the start of their careers and reward them for work which they are already doing such as assisting in the provision of food, shelter construction, reception, support and integration of migrants and refugees. Your role as Young Caritas is also important in this.
5. Member States have clear obligations as regards the family reunification of refugees under the EU asylum acquis. However they also have flexible tools to deal with the family reunification of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.
6. The Commission has adopted eight reports on the progress of the relocation and resettlement decisions, and I regularly recall the necessity and importance of accelerating their implementation. I am pleased that thus far, EU Member States have relocated over 8.000 applicants from Greece and Italy and resettled over half of the 22.504 that they committed to in summer 2015. Our reports have demonstrated an ongoing positive trend.

2./3

7. The EU – Turkey Statement has been successful in breaking the business model of smugglers that ruthlessly exploit the desperation of people fleeing conflict and violence. It has substantially cut the flow of refugees arriving unsafely in Europe and saved thousands of lives. Moreover, all individuals covered by the remit of the Statement have guaranteed rights to an individual assessment of their application for international protection.
8. As part of our reform of CEAS, we have proposed to introduce a fairness mechanism into the reform of the Dublin Regulation. When a Member State is under too high pressure from asylum applications, applicants would be automatically relocated to another Member State which, once determined, would remain permanently responsible for that applicant until the process runs its course.
9. Our proposal to reform the Reception Conditions Directive aims to ensure that asylum seekers can benefit from harmonised and dignified reception standards throughout the entire EU.

I hope the above information has provided you with some insights on the Commission's ongoing efforts to develop a more humane, fair and efficient European migration management policy. The priority set by President Juncker that 'Europe needs to manage migration better, in all aspects' is valid now more than ever.

Yours faithfully,



Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS