



Brussels, 11 April 2016
(OR. en)

7798/16

LIMITE

PE-QE 145

REPLY TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representations of the Member States
Subject:	PRELIMINARY DRAFT REPLY TO QUESTION FOR WRITTEN ANSWER E-016126/2015 - Notis Marias (ECR) Actions aimed at the creation of refugee hotspots in Turkey

1. Delegations will find attached:
 - the text of the above question for written answer;
 - a preliminary draft reply prepared by the General Secretariat.
2. If no comments have been received from delegations by 27 April 2016 (17.00), this preliminary draft reply will be submitted to the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) and to the Council for approval.

Any comments received will be examined by the Working Party on General Affairs.

Question for written answer E-016126/2015
to the Council
Rule 130
Notis Marias (ECR)

Subject: Actions aimed at the creation of refugee hotspots in Turkey

We have submitted a written question to the Commission on the measures it is proposing to oblige Turkey to put a stop to the smuggling of refugees to the Aegean islands.

We have also repeatedly stated from the floor of the plenary sessions of the European Parliament that refugee hotspots need to be created on Turkish soil, in order to avoid both illegal transportation across the Aegean and the humanitarian tragedies to which this leads, and buildups of those unfortunate people on Greek islands, where hosting infrastructure is limited.

We believe the EU institutions must take into account the constant revelations in international news reports confirming the estimates of many observers regarding the involvement of Turkish officials in the human-trafficking gangs that smuggle refugees/illegal migrants across the Aegean; this would put pressure on Turkey to accept its due responsibilities.

However, no clear, binding decision in this regard is found in the European Council conclusions, 17-18 December 2015.

Can the Council state:

- What measures it intends to take, and by when, to compel Turkey:
 - (a) to comply with its international obligations;
 - (b) to eliminate the human-trafficking gangs that are smuggling refugees; and
 - (c) to create refugee hotspots on its soil?

The October 2015 European Council¹ welcomed the Joint Action Plan with Turkey as part of a comprehensive cooperation agenda based on shared responsibility, mutual commitments and delivery, aimed at stepping up cooperation on supporting Syrian refugees under temporary protection and their host communities in Turkey, and strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU.

Under the terms of the Joint Action Plan, Turkey has committed in particular to enhancing the effective implementation of the law on foreigners and international protection, to continuing to ensure migrants' registration, as well as to enhancing their access to basic public services and their participation in the economy. Turkey has also committed to stepping up the fight against and dismantling of criminal networks involved in the smuggling of migrants, including through increased cooperation with EU Member States.

The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 has reaffirmed the commitment of both sides to pursuing the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Joint Statement also specifies that all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey. These returns will take place in full accordance with EU and international law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Action against smuggling and trafficking networks remains a priority for joint action and will continue to be monitored through the mechanisms set up by the Joint Action Plan.

The 'hotspot' approach, as presented in the Commission's European Agenda on Migration, applies solely to the EU Member States that are particularly affected by disproportionate migratory pressure, and is not part of the measures included in the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan.

¹ EUCO 26/15.