

**Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS**

*Member of the European Commission*

Brussels, 21. 10. 2015  
Ares (2015)

Dear Ms Spinelli,

Dear Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

On behalf of the President, I would like to thank you for your jointly-signed letter drawing the Commission's attention to the strong influx of migrants and asylum seekers in Greece and to the importance of providing timely support in the context of the current unprecedented migratory pressure and please accept our apologies for the delayed reply.

First of all, financial support is one of the main tools to implement the measures of the European Agenda for Migration, which not only puts forward concrete actions to respond to immediate crisis and save lives but also defines more structural measures for the medium to long term. This support is provided through the national programmes, respectively under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which constitute indeed a clear and important demonstration of material solidarity from the EU to the Member States in the fields of asylum, migration and integration, as well as internal security. As you know, the national allocations are based on criteria – agreed by the Council and the European Parliament – which reflect the specific situation of each Member State. Hence, Italy, Spain and Greece are the top beneficiaries in terms of funding and Malta in terms of funding per capita.

I am especially pleased that the AMIF and ISF national programmes for Greece have been adopted. The EU support has not been delayed in any respect. On the contrary, the Commission did its utmost to speed up as much as possible the preparation, finalisation and subsequent adoption of these programmes.

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However, the initial advance payment was dependent on Greece designating the 'Responsible Authority' to manage the Funds, and officially notifying the Commission of such designation. This is a legal pre-condition for the Commission to be able to disburse the first pre-financing payment for these programmes. The designation and correspondent notification to the Commission took place only on 14 September 2015. Following the fulfilment by Greece of this legal condition the Commission has authorised immediately on 16 September 2015 the pre-financing payments for those Funds, for a total amount of approximately EUR 33 million.

Now, concerning those Member States facing sudden high increase in migratory flows, EU financial support is channelled through emergency assistance. Considering the enormous migratory pressure at the EU southern borders, the funds available for emergency assistance have been substantially reinforced for 2015 with an increase of EUR 25 million for AMIF (doubling the amount initially foreseen) and EUR 5 million for ISF Borders and Visa. The Commission proposed a similar increase for 2016. This came on top of an internal budget reallocation of another EUR 1.5 million to AMIF emergency assistance and EUR 9.11 million to ISF Borders and Visa emergency assistance. Yesterday, the Commission has announced, in its Communication on "*managing the refugees crisis*" a proposal for another €100 million increase for 2015<sup>1</sup>.

Please note that in the last months, Greece has been awarded emergency aid for a total amount of approximately EUR 9 million and such emergency assistance will be increased very soon, since the Commission is currently examining new requests for emergency support submitted recently by Greece earlier this month.

In order to make full use of European solidarity, the Commission has been also encouraging Greece to request the activation of the European Civil Protection Mechanism to allow providing support to manage the acute phase of the crisis, thus representing another stopgap measure towards a more sustainable solution.

As regards the Decision establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece, which was backed by the Parliament at its September part-session and adopted by the Council on 14 September 2015, and more particularly the relocation of 16.000 asylum seekers from Greece to other Member States you mention in your letter, let me point out that my services have been in continuous contact and cooperation on a technical level with the Greek authorities, in view of ensuring that this decision will be swiftly implemented. As requested, the Greek authorities submitted a roadmap that presents their need for support to address the mass influx of migrants and will soon be finalised.

Of course this decision was only a first step for the Member States to show that solidarity is not an empty word. Following the sharp increase in irregular border crossings over the last few months not only in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean but also on the Western Balkans route, which requires urgent action, President Juncker presented, on 9 September, the Commission's proposals for a second relocation Decision for an additional 120.000 asylum seekers of which 50.400 persons in clear need of international protection would be relocated from Greece to other Member States.

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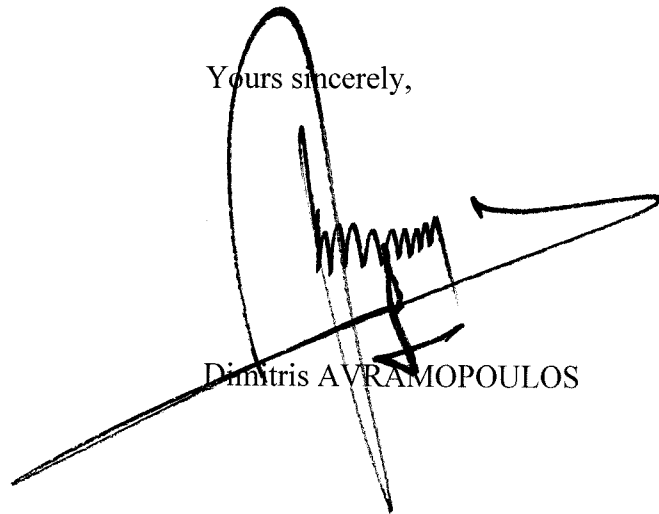
<sup>1</sup> Com 2015(490) final

Thanks to the swift support provided by the European Parliament, this decision was adopted by the JHA Council on 22 September 2015. The Commission will follow-up swiftly with the adoption of this decision.

To support the implementation of these solidarity measures, the Commission has proposed to increase the financial support under AMIF by more than EUR 1.1 billion to implement the relocation of 160.000 people, the resettlement of over 20.000 people. These measures will assist Greece, directly and indirectly, to deal with the exceptional migratory pressure.

I know I can count on your full support and cooperation so that the EU can address together the exceptional situation that we are currently confronted with in the area of migration and asylum.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a series of horizontal wavy lines and a final flourish.

Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS