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During the JHA Council in June 2022, ministers in charge of migration matters in 18 Member States and three associated countries committed to implement a Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism. In a well-defined and predictable way, needs-based assistance would be provided to Member States most affected by migratory flows in the Mediterranean area, including the Western Atlantic route, through relocation and financial contributions.

The voluntary nature of the mechanism allows supporting states to determine the nature and amount of their contributions, as well as the Member State to which their solidarity is provided. However, a number of common criteria should be applied to ensure the predictability of the mechanism:

- Priority should be given to search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and Western Atlantic routes, in addition to other situations in Cyprus and the Greek islands, for example;
- Relocations should primarily apply to persons in need of international protection, giving priority to the most vulnerable;
- A total annual number of relocations should be set;
- Each contributing Member State should present a pledge on the target number of relocations, which is based on the population size and gross domestic product (GDP); and
- A Member State can withhold commitments temporarily in the case of disproportionate pressure on its reception system due to secondary flows, taking into account the state of cooperation under the Dublin system.186

Member States can also express solidarity through financial contributions or the implementation of a project in a third country that may have a direct impact on the flows at the external border.

To coordinate the implementation of the mechanism, the European Commission established a Solidarity Platform on the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism and coordinates the relocation processes in close collaboration with participating countries and with the operational support of EU Agencies. The EUAA plays a key role in the relocation process by providing additional operational support to competent authorities of European countries. The first relocation transfers under the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism started in August 2022.187

The agreement on the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism was a welcome breakthrough, since the application of the principle of solidarity in practice – one of the core principles of the Pact on Migration and Asylum – has often faced disagreement among Member States.

- 186French Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2022. (2022, June 22). First step in the gradual implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum: modus operandi of a voluntary solidarity mechanism. https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20221120105510/https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/first-step-in-the-gradual-implementation-of-the-european-pact-on-migration-and-asylum-modus-operandi-of-a-voluntary-solidarity-mechanism-1/
- 187European Commission. (n.d.). Relocation: EU solidarity in practice. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migration-management/relocation-eu-solidarity-practice_en

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