

Search and Rescue Support and Relocation

SAR support and Relocation

The international law of the sea stipulates a clear duty to render assistance in case of vessels or persons in distress at sea and proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress.

EU Regulation 656/2014, which establishes rules on Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and disembarkation provides a common EU concept of ‘place of safety’ which is protection-driven.

Since the summer of 2018, a number of cases of disembarkations following SAR operations at sea have been addressed through ad hoc disembarkation and voluntary relocation arrangements.

The number of SAR events in the Mediterranean in 2019 underlined the need for a more systematic and coordinated EU approach on first reception, registration and relocation of migrants and refugees rescued at sea.

During the Ministerial Meeting on Migration held in Malta in September 2019, a Joint Declaration of Intent was concluded by France, Germany, Italy and Malta for a structured, temporary emergency procedure to manage ad hoc disembarkations and relocation arrangements.

Since January 2019, the Agency provides support for voluntary relocation programmes to the concerned national authorities as well participating Member States, following disembarkations from SAR events in Malta and Italy, under the coordination of the European Commission and in pursuance of Standard Operating Procedures agreed by participating Member States.

Relocation
activities with children

The Agency has been mobilised to provide support to Member States authorities in the implementation of voluntary relocation arrangements, in the areas of first reception, provision of information on international protection procedure, asylum registrations for international protection and pre-relocation matching procedures as per agreed criteria with the national authorities and the European Commission.

The Agency has also been assisting Greek authorities and participating Member States in the relocation of UAM (Unaccompanied Minors) of UAM and other eligible relocation beneficiaries from Greece, under a dedicated project funded by the European Commission.

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Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism

Following the Solidarity Declaration **(First step in the gradual implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum: modus operandi of a voluntary solidarity mechanism**) on 22 June 2022 **the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM)** was established to address disproportionate pressure faced by Mediterranean Member States, with regards to migratory flows.

The Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism foresees several instruments for the participating States (21 Member or Associated States) to **express solidarity**, including the relocation of asylum seekers or alternatively the provision of financial contribution to benefiting Member States.

The Declaration refers to Member States confronted with **disembarkations after SAR operations** in the Med and Western Atlantic route and to Cyprus situation and possible evolutions on Greek islands (MED5 countries: **Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain**), involving persons in need of international protection with priority for vulnerable persons.

In the framework of the relocation, EUAA support includes the identification of candidates, information provision and relocation interviews, **matching eligible candidates** with the most appropriate State, as well as sharing lists of proposed candidates with the States pledging to receive the applicants. The Agency is also helping to **implement harmonised procedures and tools** at the various stages of the workflow. In this context, the EUAA launched a **data sharing platform** to facilitate the exchange of information, including lists of candidates and personal data, between all stakeholders

SAR Events Support in the South of Italy



As part of the Operating Plan to Italy, since May 2021 the Agency has been supporting the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Italian Ministry of Interior.

Examples of the support includes:

- **Support the coordination among actors involved in the disembarkation procedures**, and to strengthen info/data sharing on arrivals and transfers to quarantine before the allocation of applicants to the reception system.

- **Liaise with actors present in Lampedusa** (at the dock and in the hotspot) and collect all relevant information to support the Ministry of Interior in monitoring sea arrivals and the situation within the hotspot.
- **Enhance a data management and reporting system on arrivals in Lampedusa** with a special focus on Unaccompanied Minors and vulnerable cases.
- **Facilitate the referral of vulnerable cases** to Prefecture of Agrigento to enhance prompt action, including medical evacuations or urgent actions.
- **liaise with relevant actors and the managing entity of the hotspot** to ensure the adequate, smooth and prompt transfer to quarantine facilities taking into consideration special needs and vulnerabilities identified.

Starting from the second quarter of 2022, an increase of arrivals by sea have been registered, + 57% of disembarkation events compared to the same period in 2021. The main target area for both SAR events and spontaneous landings remains the South of Italy with a particular focus to Sicily, Calabria and the Apulia regions.

SAR events support also includes to support Italian authorities in providing information to migrants on international protection, Dublin system and Voluntary Solidarity mechanism

Support to VR in Italy

Italy Operation - Voluntary relocation

EUAA has been supporting the authorities and strengthening their capacity by carrying out the following activities:

- **Provision of information** on international protection procedure and voluntary relocation to applicants for international protection.
- **Registration of applicants for international protection**, highlighting and prioritising vulnerable cases.
- **Matching registered applicants with pledges** offered by pledging Member States, sharing draft redistribution lists with Member State authorities.
- In collaboration with IOM, providing extra information in advance of missions of **pledging Member States to Voluntary Relocation hubs** in Italy.
- **Supporting the missions of Member States to Voluntary Relocation** hubs by providing logistical support, coordination of cultural mediators and other ad-hoc administrative support.
- **Supporting the Italian Dublin Unit** with sharing information and files of applicants proposed to Member States with the relevant authorities.
- **Liaising and coordinating with the local Immigration Office**s, managing entities of the VR hubs and other stakeholders involved in the activities to ensure collaboration and smooth implementation of the programme.

Support to VR in Malta

Malta Operations - Voluntary Relocation

The EUAA’s support to the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality of the Republic of Malta in activities related to the relocation of applicants or beneficiaries of international protection includes the following:

- **The collection of relevant information of applicants**, including data on possible vulnerabilities.
- **Support the registration**, screening and drafting of the relocation distribution list.
- **Carrying out matching exercises** between applicants and Member States available for relocation.
- I**nformation provision** to applicants on relocation.

Related content

- EUAA Asylum and Reception Operational Response Catalogue

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