



Valletta Harbour, 10 September 2019

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Note on the 'Messina Model' applied in the context of ad hoc relocation arrangements following disembarkation

The 'Messina model' can be understood as the practical *modus operandi* that was developed, applied and tested in Messina, Sicily during the Seawatch 3 disembarkation / voluntary relocation in March 2019.

This model has subsequently been applied in several other disembarkations / voluntary relocations in/ from Malta and Italy and has proved to be a robust but flexible mechanism. Three of these operations are still on-going (Ocean Viking in Malta and Open Arms and Eleanor in Italy).

Under this model, EASO deploys an Asylum Support Team or teams to the requesting authority upon the Commissions' request and provides the following support:

- Information Provision access to procedure and on relocation.
- Development and subsequent application of relocation matching criteria. The cascaded criteria applied include: i) application of the Dublin criteria and urgent vulnerable cases; ii) family links iii) cultural links; iv) subsequent fair and proportional allocation system among participating Member States.
- Pre selection interviews with cultural mediation and preparation of proposed matching list for Commission for distribution to Member States.
- Support for Member State selection missions – logistics, coordination and cultural mediation, support for cultural orientation sessions and general back office support.
- Conducting of selection missions on behalf of certain Member States.
- Support for remote selection missions where requested (virtual connection and remote interpretation).
- Support for registration of applicants in Eurodac & host MS databases (e.g. Vestanet in Italy)
- Support for coordination between Member States.
- Support for UAMs and other vulnerable groups where requested in terms of vulnerability assessments and social work support.
- Support for the respective Dublin Units in terms of take charge support, travel documentation support, relocation notifications and related information provision for relocation applicants.

The Messina model requires and foresees that the legal basis of the intervention should be article 17 of the Dublin Regulation.

It should be noted that the vast majority of persons do apply for international protection, which renders them eligible for relocation and triggers the applicability of article 17 of the Dublin Regulation. However, the assessment of the need for international protection takes place after relocation in the Member State of relocation and this is therefore not part of the process that EASO is involved in.



As at 9 September 2019, the Messina model was implemented in the following events:

In Malta

- December 2018 – January 2019: Seawatch 1 – 16 adults and 10 UAMs
- March – April 2019: Alan Kurdi – 62 adults (no UAMs)
- July 2019: Alan Kurdi and linked Maltese Naval Disembarkation – 123 migrants
- August 2019 Alan Kurdi 40 migrants
- August 2019 (ongoing): Ocean Viking 565 migrants

In Italy

- February – March 2019: Seawatch 3 – 47 migrants (32 adults and 15 UAMs)
- May 2019: Cigala Fulgosi – 36 migrants (30 adults, 6 UAMs)
- June 2019: Cigala- Fulgosi – 100 migrants (59 adults and 29 UAMs)
- July 2019: Seawatch – 53 migrants (45 adults, 5 UAMs)
- August 2019: Gregoretti – 141 migrants (112 adults, 26 UAMs)
- August 2019 (ongoing) : Open Arms – 155 migrants
- August 2019 (ongoing): Eleanor – 93 migrants

So far, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain, as well as the Vatican, have participated in at least one of the ad hoc relocation exercises that EASO was involved in.

Asylum-seekers relocated were from a wide range of nationalities including large numbers from North and West African countries, Eritrea, Somalia, smaller numbers from other Central and Southern African countries and Afghanistan. It should be noted that there has been a significant number of unaccompanied minors, whose relocation has presented significance challenges, as there are inevitably different timelines involved due to the need for the appointment of legal guardians and the conducting of age assessment and best interest assessments, which can take significant additional time.

Furthermore, it is evident that there is a distinct preference among the pledging Member States not to accept unaccompanied minors which leads to large numbers of unaccompanied minors not being relocated and thus sometimes MS pledges not being fulfilled.

Lessons learned – future models

These experiences and the **lessons-learned provide a model for future disembarkation operations** and could be further built upon to ensure better preparedness, to increase predictability and to promote a sustainable solidarity mechanism.

Lessons learned from the disembarkations and ad hoc relocation exercises included:



- In all voluntary relocation exercises following disembarkations to date, EASO was able to successfully lead and manage efficient functional operations proving that **EASO involvement from the outset** is of significant benefit to the MS experiencing ad hoc disembarkations and the MS making relocation pledges. EASO can initiate interviews within 48 hours from the Commission request for operational support.
- Stronger **operational cooperation with first reception authorities** and other agencies could in certain cases enable an even quicker response.
- EASO now has the operational experience, capacity, flexibility and technical competencies to provide **full end-to-end processing and support** in future events.
- EASO developed **an agreed methodology for the selection and matching** that has been successfully applied and can now be used in the future. The criteria applied include: i) application of the Dublin criteria and urgent vulnerable cases; ii) family and cultural links; iii) subsequent proportional allocation system. Lately these matching criteria have been complemented by a series of “preferences” expressed by MS on a boat-by-boat basis, that EASO was able to take into consideration for the matching exercise as much as possible. Clearly, the more harmonised the process it, the more efficient it will be.
- The experiences confirm that a voluntary relocation mechanism is technically possible; the registration of the arrivals as applicants for international protection and the application of **article 17 of the Dublin Regulation ensure a proper legal basis** for the subsequent relocation of applicants.
- While each Member State has specific requirements in respect of voluntary relocation, there is **no requirement for the Member States to travel** to the host Member State at any stage. For instance:
 - EASO supported Portugal and Romania by conducting the exclusion interviews fully on their behalf based on agreed criteria during four separate operations.
 - EASO supported Luxembourg by arranging for their selection interviews to be conducted remotely via Skype with remote interpretation support.

This proved **very time efficient and a significant reduction in cost and human resources** required for the concerned Member State. The concerned Member State noted to EASO that this was a possible template for other Member a States to adopt.

For any future disembarkation events, EASO has **developed standby teams** that can be deployed in events of different scale and EASO has developed **operational planning frameworks** to ensure timely responses in these different scenarios.