
REFUGEES FACE ASYLUM REJECTION IF THEY LEAVE COUNTRY OF ARRIVAL, UNDER NEW EU RULES

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Asylum seekers moving to other EU countries after arriving in Europe will face having their applications for international protection rejected, under tougher rules put forward by the European Commission today (13 July).

The executive proposed a revamp of its existing, failed asylum directive, which it will replace with a regulation, in response to the refugee crisis. 1.3 million people asked for asylum in the EU last year.

A regulation must be put straight onto national lawbooks, enforcing standard asylum procedures across the EU. The UK, Denmark and Ireland have opt-outs exempting them from the rules.

Under the current directive sanctions for asylum seekers moving to a different country than that they arrived in are optional.

They will now be made compulsory and include the rejection of the asylum application, provided both the European Parliament and Council of Ministers ultimately agree to the legislation.

Preventing secondary movement of refugees is a priority for policymakers after the chaos of last years migration crisis. An estimate one million migrants and refugees arrived in Europe in 2015, 97% of them arriving by sea in principally Greece and Italy.

But many of those arrivals did not stay in Greece and Italy but moved on in a bid to reach Germany, sparking scenes of displacement and desperation not witnessed in Europe since the Second World War.

The crisis led to the reinstatement of border controls in the passport-free Schengen zone and exposed deep divisions in the bloc. For example, Hungary, which will hold an October referendum on EU migration policy, erected a highly controversial border fence.

The Dublin Regulation, which has not been enforced, states that an asylum seeker arriving in the EU must claim asylum in the first country they arrive in.

New rules allow member states to assign asylum seekers a residence and compel them to report to the authorities. Detention is allowed for those not staying in the residence, or at risk of absconding.

The current directive allows for a five-year waiting period for refugees to be eligible for long-term resident status. That period will be restarted if a person is found in another member state, under the new bill.

International protection will also only be granted for as long as it is needed, the Commission said. There will be reviews of asylum seeker status if the situation in their home countries improves.

Asylum shopping

Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said that the new regulation would standardise asylum procedures across the EU. This would stop asylum shopping across the bloc, he said.

As well as introducing the stricter rules on secondary movement, the bill would raise standards for the treatment of asylum seekers across the EU, he said.

We are not on a race to the bottom. It is exactly the opposite, he said. Migration and mobility will be with us for a long time and we have to be prepared. It is not a question of how and when we will stop this but how we can turn it into an opportunity.

Asylum procedures will be shortened and simplified. Decisions on applications must be made in six months or less.

The speed at which asylum seekers gain the right to work varies across the EU. The new rules foresee access to the labour market six months after the application is lodged.

This will make asylum seekers less dependent on social security assistance and aid integration. But some types of social assistance could also be made conditional on an asylum seeker taking part in integration measures.

The Commission said that asylum reception centre conditions would be dignified and harmonised across the EU.

Asylum seekers will also be guaranteed the right to legal representation and a personal interview. Rules protecting unaccompanied children and those with special needs will also be bolstered.

Let me remind you that Europe already has the highest asylum standards in the world, said Avramopoulos.

Resettlement framework

The Commission also put forward plans to encourage EU countries to resettle refugees from countries outside the EU, such as Turkey and Jordan, which have borne the brunt of the crisis.

The new proposal will not include a distribution key, a model designating which countries should take how many, based on factors such as population and GDP.

Member states will decide how many refugees are to be resettled. That process will be formalised through annual resettlement plans, backed up with a payment from the EU budget for

each refugee resettled.

The plans will set out where people need to be resettled from and how many should be resettled.

<http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/under-new-eu-rules-refugees-face-asylum-rejection-if-they-leave-country-of-arrival/>

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