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## EU MINISTERS IN MALTA TO THRASH OUT NEW MIGRANT SYSTEM

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Interior ministers from four EU countries meet Monday (23 September) in Malta to try to work out an automatic system to determine which countries will welcome migrants rescued in the central Mediterranean.

The ministers from France, Germany, Italy and Malta hope to end the long, drawn-out negotiations that have seen vulnerable asylum seekers including babies stranded at sea, sometimes for weeks.

They take place ahead of a European summit in October in Luxembourg.

The mooted automatic distribution system would only be a temporary solution until the current system, the Dublin regulation, can be revised.

Its critics have long argued that it places an unfair burden on the Mediterranean frontier countries Italy, Malta, Greece and Spain.

Italy's new, pro-EU government has moved quickly to turn the page on the anti-migrant policies pursued by former far-right interior minister Matteo Salvini, who closed the ports to those rescued.

After a meeting last week, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and French President Emmanuel Macron both called for a reform of Europe's ineffective policy.

Countries that did not volunteer to take migrants should face financial penalties, they argued.

### **Rotation?**

At an informal meeting of foreign and interior ministers in Paris in June, 15 countries agreed to the creation of a European Solidarity Mechanism.

Croatia, Finland, France, Ireland, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Portugal said they would actively take part.

But Hungary's nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, rejected redistribution quotas in comments made during a visit to Rome Saturday.

Monday's meeting in Malta will try to decide where those rescued can be relocated — and whether that covers just those fleeing war and persecution, or economic migrants too.

France and Germany are reportedly willing to receive 25% of people plucked from vessels in the Mediterranean.

But they are not keen on Italy's idea for migrants to be sent to countries across southern Europe on a rotation basis.

Italy could take 10% of new arrivals — a lower proportion because it has already hosted tens of thousands of new arrivals.

The number of migrants arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean has dropped sharply in recent years. The UN's refugee body recorded nearly 115,000 arrivals in 2018, down from 170,000 in 2017 and over one million in 2015.

European migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos will also attend the Malta talks, as will Finland's interior minister — as they hold the EU presidency.

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Kaynak/Source: