

National Policies and Measures on Irregular Migration and Return: Greece

Michail S. Kosmidis

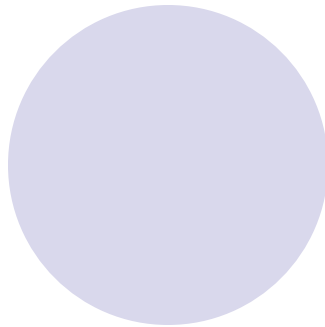
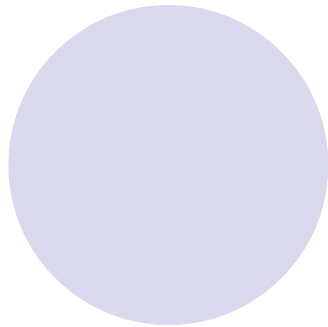
MSc, Head of Migration Policy Unit, Ministry of Interior and
Administrative Reform & Deputy Member of the EMN Steering Board

National EMN Conference / 21 September 2015, Vienna

Structure of the presentation

- I. General Description (situation)
- II. Available Data (apprehensions, returns & smugglers)
- III. Management of Irregular Migration and Return in Greece (structures, policies & measures)
- IV. Challenges

I. General Description (situation, problems)





General Description 1

- Greece is facing in recent years **a gradually rising mixed migratory pressure**, particularly due to the continuing unstable situation in Syria, **that** (along with other regional factors) **tends to take an “exodus” character** (2015)
- **Shift** of migratory flows (2015) **from Evros River (Region) to Eastern Sea borders** (raises particular difficulties)



General Description 2

- Difficulties in readmission process, such as **lack of travel documents**, **lack on the implementation of EC or bilateral readmission agreements (Turkey)**, **non – cooperation** of various consulate authorities or **absence** of consular authorities (e.g. Afghanistan)

General Description 3 / Regional Factors 1

- Continuation of **the unstable political situation** in Syria and other countries of Asia and (northern and / or central) Africa
- Difficult **living conditions in refugee camps** in neighbour countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey)

General Description 4 / Regional Factors 2

- Geographical position of Greece
 - **2 – 4 miles distance** of various Greek island from the Turkish coasts,
 - **13.700 km** coastline &
 - **Good weather conditions** (during summer and / or autumn)

General Description 5 / Regional Factors 3



General Description 6 / Regional Factors 4

● **Role of Turkey**

- has already received more than one (1) million of Syrian nationals &
- estimations that more than two (2) million Syrians are expected to try enter Europe
- do not implement (sufficiently) the readmission protocol with GR

● **Preventive measures by other EU states**(intensify drastically the flows during implementation)

General Description 7 / Regional Factors 5: Lack of ...

- appropriate number of first reception centers and / or pre-removal centres in South Aegean area
- manpower and difficulties in recruitment due to financial restrictions
- adequate financial resources: financial gap between the Solidarity Funds (2007 – 2013) and the new financial period (2014 – 2020), **especially in the area of return**

II. Available Data (apprehensions, returns & smugglers)

*Data Source: Ministry of Interior
and Administrative Reform /
Police Headquarters*



Available Data I

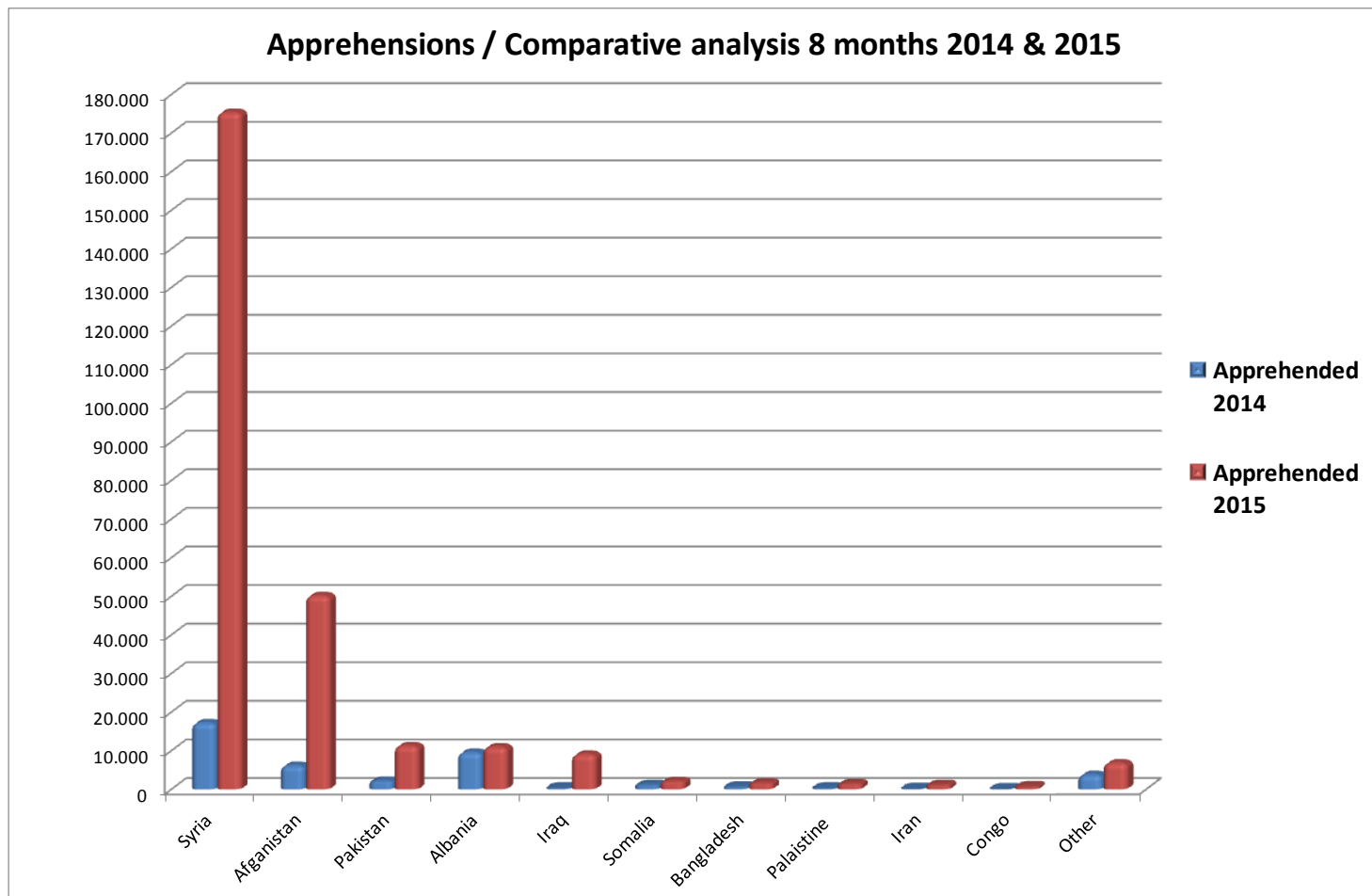
- **300.003** apprehended TCNs (Jan – 17 Sept. 2015)
- **271.156** apprehended TCNs during Jan – Aug 2015 (**41.935** during the same period 2014)
 - **175.375** Syrian nationals (**17.232** in 2014) & **50.177** Afghani nationals (**6.174** in 2014)



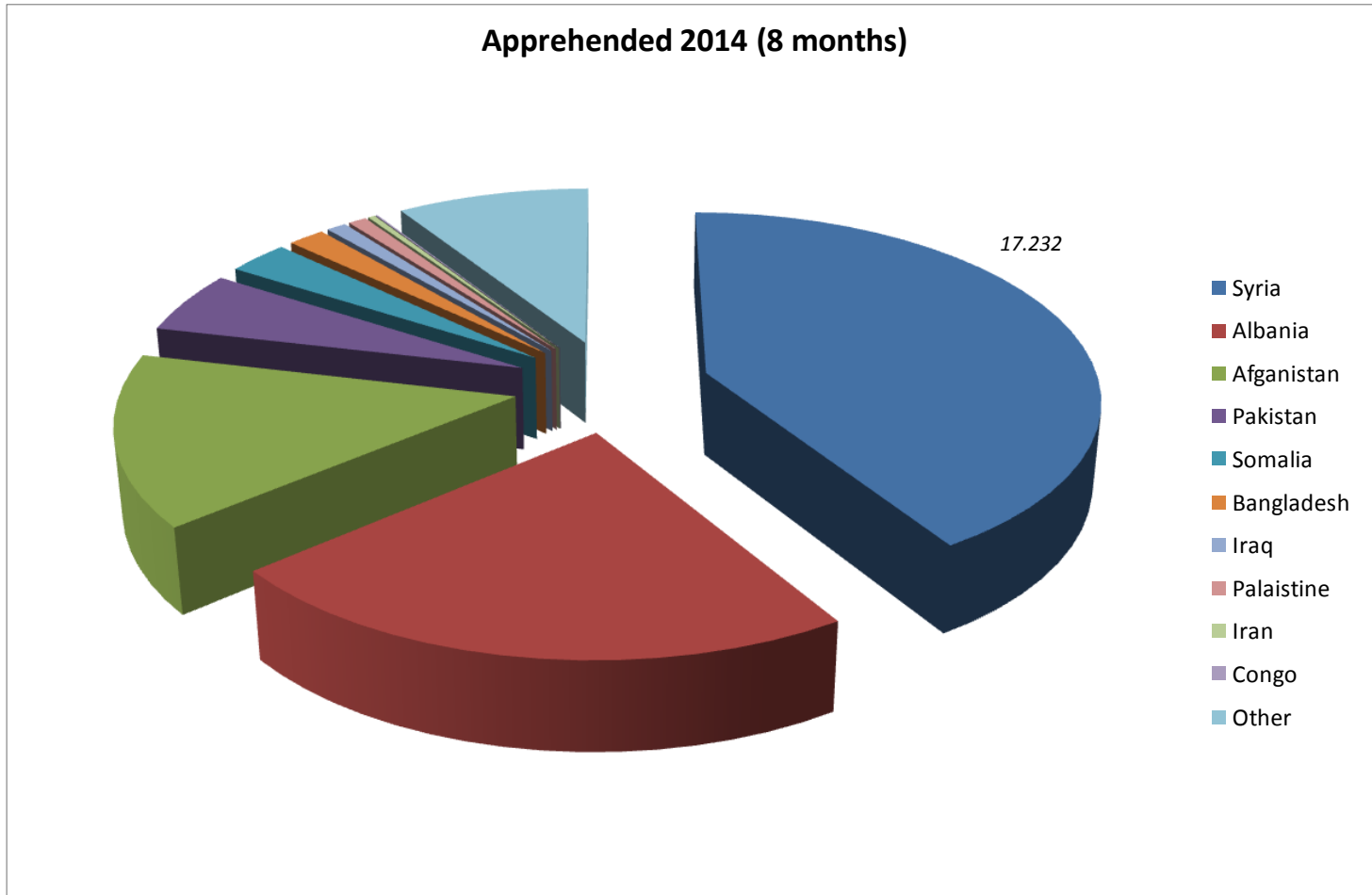
Available Data II

- **14.260** returned TCNs during Jan – August 2015 (**16.498** during the same period 2014)
- **886** smugglers arrested during Jan – Aug 2015 (**737** during the same period 2014)
- **55.000** TCNs rescued by the Hellenic Coastguard during Jan – Aug 2015

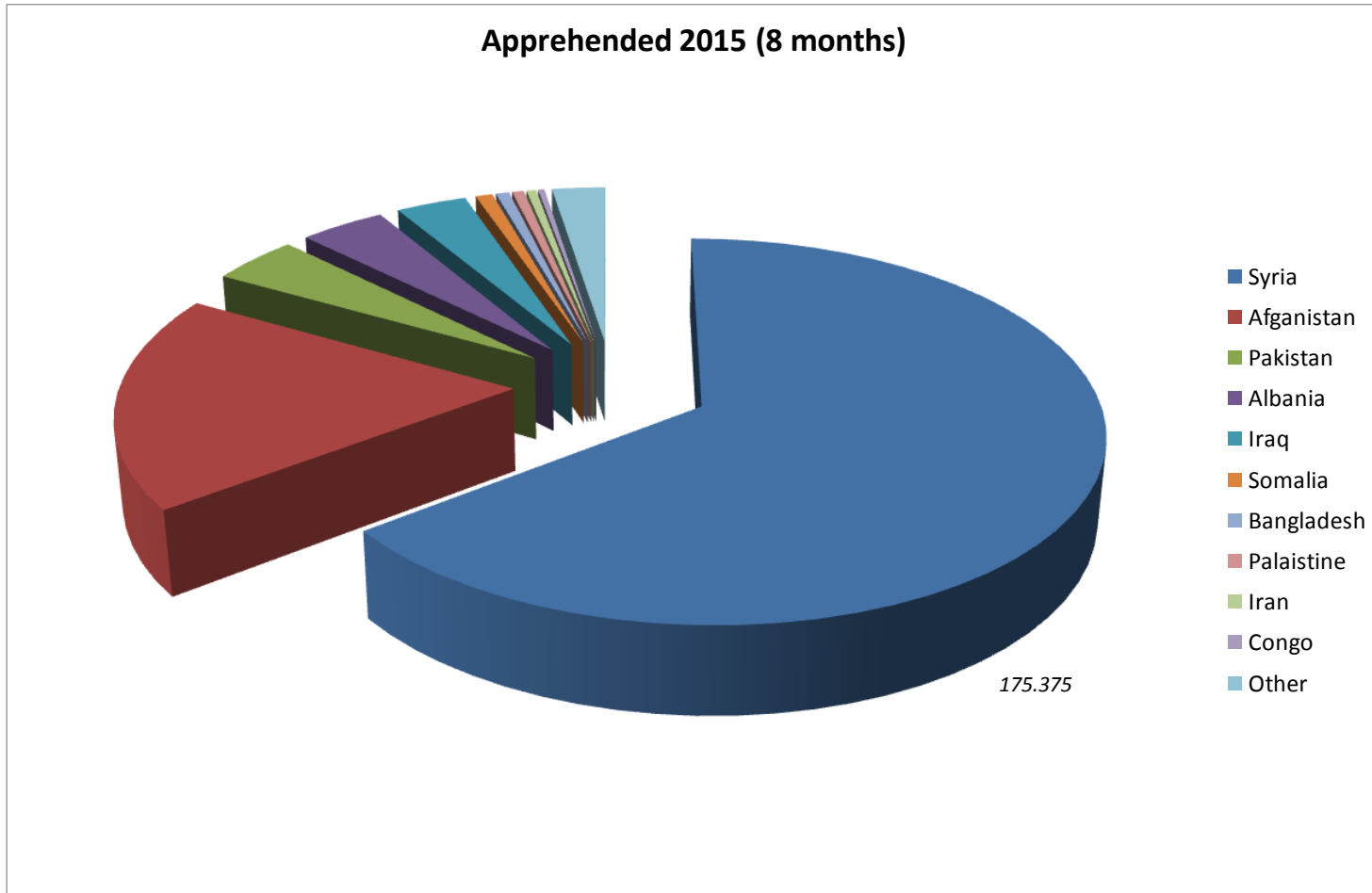
Apprehensions / Comparative analysis 8 months 2014 – 2015



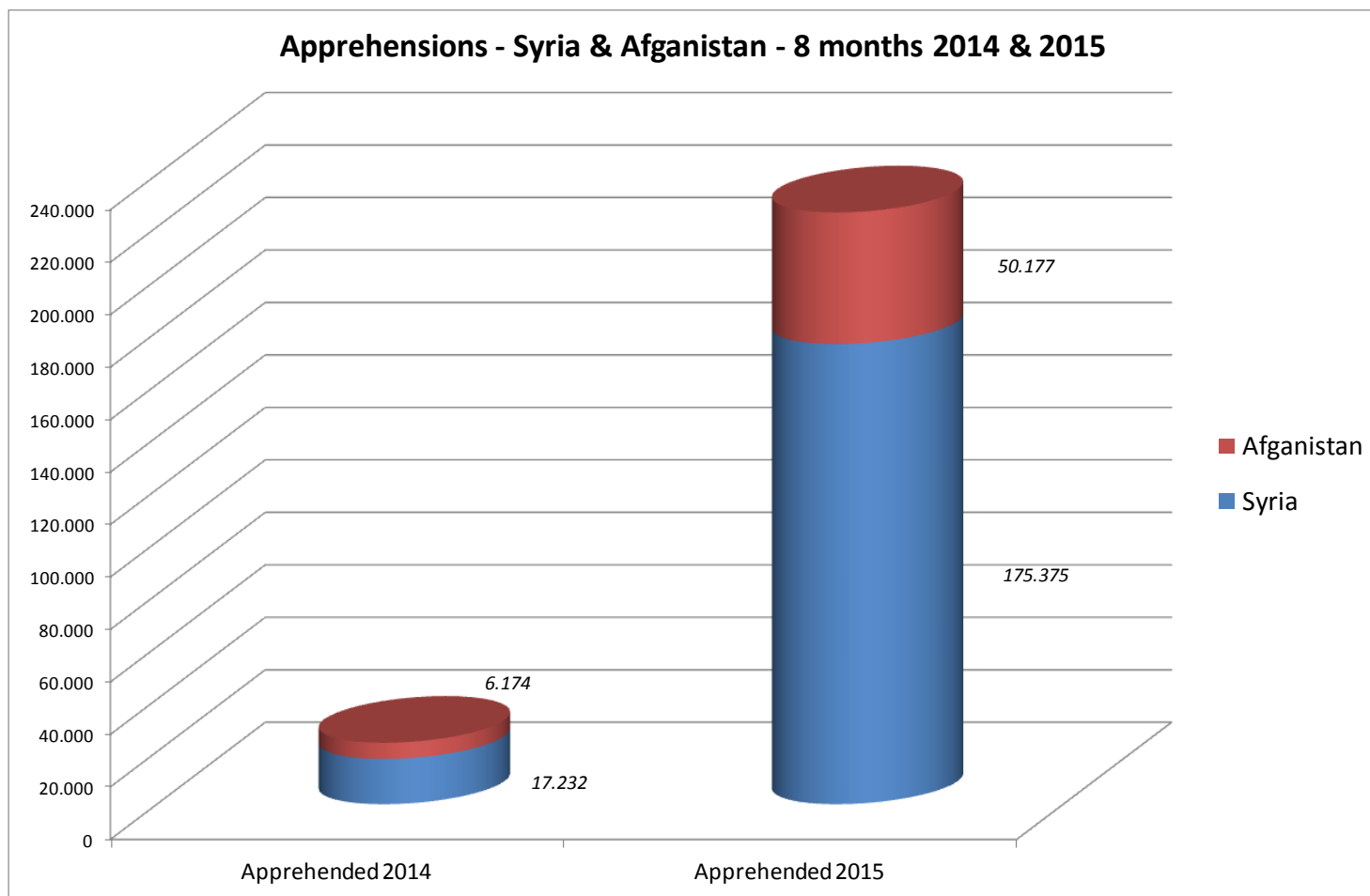
Apprehensions 2014 (8 months)



Apprehensions 2015 (8 months)



Apprehensions / Comparative analysis 2014 – 2015 (Syrians & Afghanis)





III. Management of Irregular Migration and Return:

Structures, Policies & Measures



Structures I

- **Asylum Service, Appeals Authority & First Reception Service (since 2013)**
- **New Service on the strategic planning and the coordination of the implementation of AMIF & ISF (September 2015)**



Structures II

Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform / Police Headquarters

- Policies on **readmission, return** (in cooperation with IOM) & **border control**
- **Pre-removal centers (7)**
- Examination of Asylum Applications – **Backlog**



Structures III

- **Asylum Service:** Central Asylum Service, 6 Regional Asylum Offices & 3 Asylum Units
- **Appeals Authority:** Independent appeal committees examining first instance rejection decisions on asylum



Structures IV

First Reception Service

- Central Service
- 2 First Reception Centers (Evros, Lesvos)
- 2 Mobile Units (Samos, Lesvos)
- Open Accommodation Centers (2 in Athens under First Reception Service & various small facilities)



Structures V

Hellenic Police Headquarters (1):

- responsible on return (e.g. voluntary return in cooperation with IOM Greece),
- responsible on border control (e.g. deployment of extra police forces - operations “**Shield**” and “**Sarisa**” -, common operations with FRONTEX and Hellenic Coastguard - “**Poseidon Land**” & “**Poseidon Sea**”)



Structures VI

Hellenic Police Headquarters (2):

- responsible on examination of old asylum applications – **Backlog** (applications submitted till June 2013 / 1 application in first instance, 22.994 application in second instance & examined in both instances 59.383 / 72,09% of the total Backlog has been examined)
- **Pre-removal - detention centers (7)**



Measures and Actions I

Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management 2010 (revised 2013) in close cooperation with EU

- Establishment of First Reception, Asylum Services and Appeals Authority
- Examination of pending applications on international protection (Backlog)



Measures and Actions II

GR Roadmap on Asylum (2015):
presented by Greece and reflects the
current state of play, as well as includes
concrete objectives and deliverables
foreseen for 2015:

- adequate first reception conditions
- full access to asylum procedures
- increase capacity of open accommodation



Measures and Actions III

Portfolio of Migration Policy under an Alternate Minister in the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform (since January 2015):

- GS for Population and Social Cohesion,
- Asylum Service & Appeals Authority,
- First Reception Service &
- Service on EU Funds (AMIF & ISF)

Measures and Actions / Reception I (First Reception Service)

- Completion of the recruitment procedure
- Additional First Reception Centers & Units
- Memorandum of cooperation between Hellenic Coastguard and UNHCR
- Training of police and coastguard personnel on human rights
- Close cooperation in the field with international organisations & NGOs

Measures and Actions / Reception II

- Establishment of Common Standard Operating Procedures & monitoring mechanism for the operation of the reception facilities
- Setting up a minimum of 2500 places in open accommodation facilities for applicants of international protection
- Development of a comprehensive national strategy on unaccompanied minors

Measures and Actions / Asylum I

Management of “backlog”

- Finalisation of the pending applications for international protection submitted to the Hellenic Police under the previous legal regime (appeal stage)
- Grant of protection (humanitarian) status to persons, whose asylum application has been pending for too long

Measures and Actions / Asylum II

Asylum Procedure

- Strengthening the capacity of the Asylum Service to ensure full access to the asylum procedure (including implementation of relocation process)
- Provision of free legal aid for asylum seekers

Measures and Actions / Return

During the period between the previous Return Fund and the new AMIF, Greece authorities in close cooperation with European Commission **try to find a way of funding through emergency funding** (especially on voluntary return in cooperation), **while planning to start the implementation of return programmes in the framework of AMIF immediately**

Measures and Actions / Implementation of “hotspot”

- Registration and fingerprinting in EURODAC of irregular migrants arriving in First Reception Centres: **establishment of one hotspot (Piraeus) with five (5) operational Units in five (5) islands (Lesvos, Kos, Samos, Chios & Leros)**
- Details on the implementation are under discussion, in parallel with other initiatives and measures



IV. Challenges



Challenge I

Finalisation of the establishment of **an effective Greek national policy on management of irregular migration, especially in the current heavy migratory pressure ...**



Challenge II

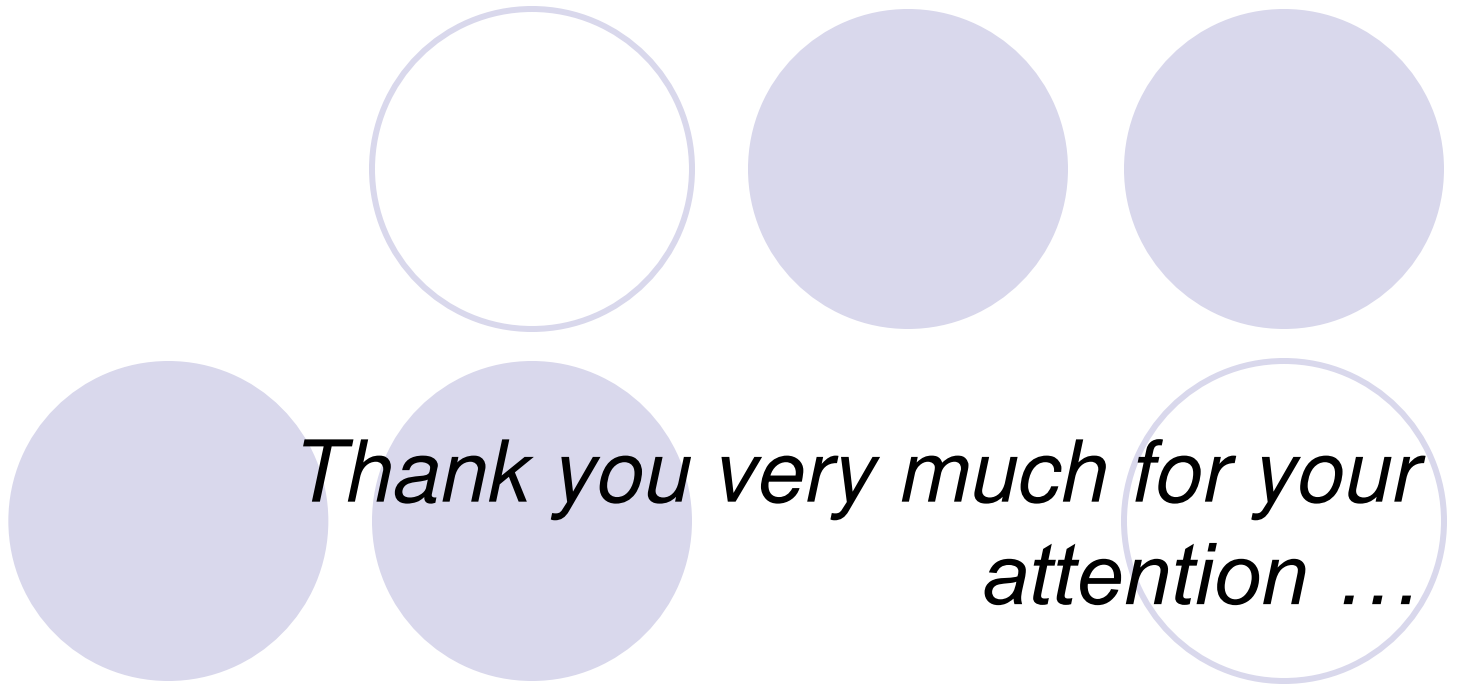
Adequate contribution of the Union to Greece and other member states (facing the vast majority of mixed migration flows from Middle East)

- **in terms of solidarity and responsibility sharing** (on going reallocation discussions) and
- **based on a pragmatic approach** (effective return and readmission) ...



Challenge III

**Enhancing European Union's
role as a global actor
in the external relations area, in the
Middle East crisis.**



*Thank you very much for your
attention ...*