

# EU sues Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland over low refugee intake

The European Commission is suing eastern member states for failing to fulfill their legal obligations in accepting a share of asylum seekers. The defendants claim that the EU is interfering with their sovereignty.



The European Commission took the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) Thursday over their failure to accept their required quotas for refugees.

The contentious scheme, which was adopted at the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, was focused on “burden-sharing,” meaning that 160,000 refugees should be relocated across most of the bloc’s 28 member-states to ease the burden on Greece and Italy.

*Read more:* The EU migrant relocation and resettlement scheme – what you need to know

It means that the three eastern nations would have to settle around 8,000

migrants between them as part of the quota. However, so far Hungary and Poland have taken in none at all, while the Czech Republic has accepted just 12.

By pursuing these countries at the ECJ, Brussels is showing its determination to see this scheme carried out. It is also fueling a new clash between the EU body and important eastern member states.

“The European Commission has today decided to refer the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to the Court of Justice of the EU for non-compliance with their legal obligations on relocation,” the Commission said in a statement. “This is why the Commission has decided to move to the next stage of the infringement procedure and refer the three member states to the Court of Justice of the EU.”

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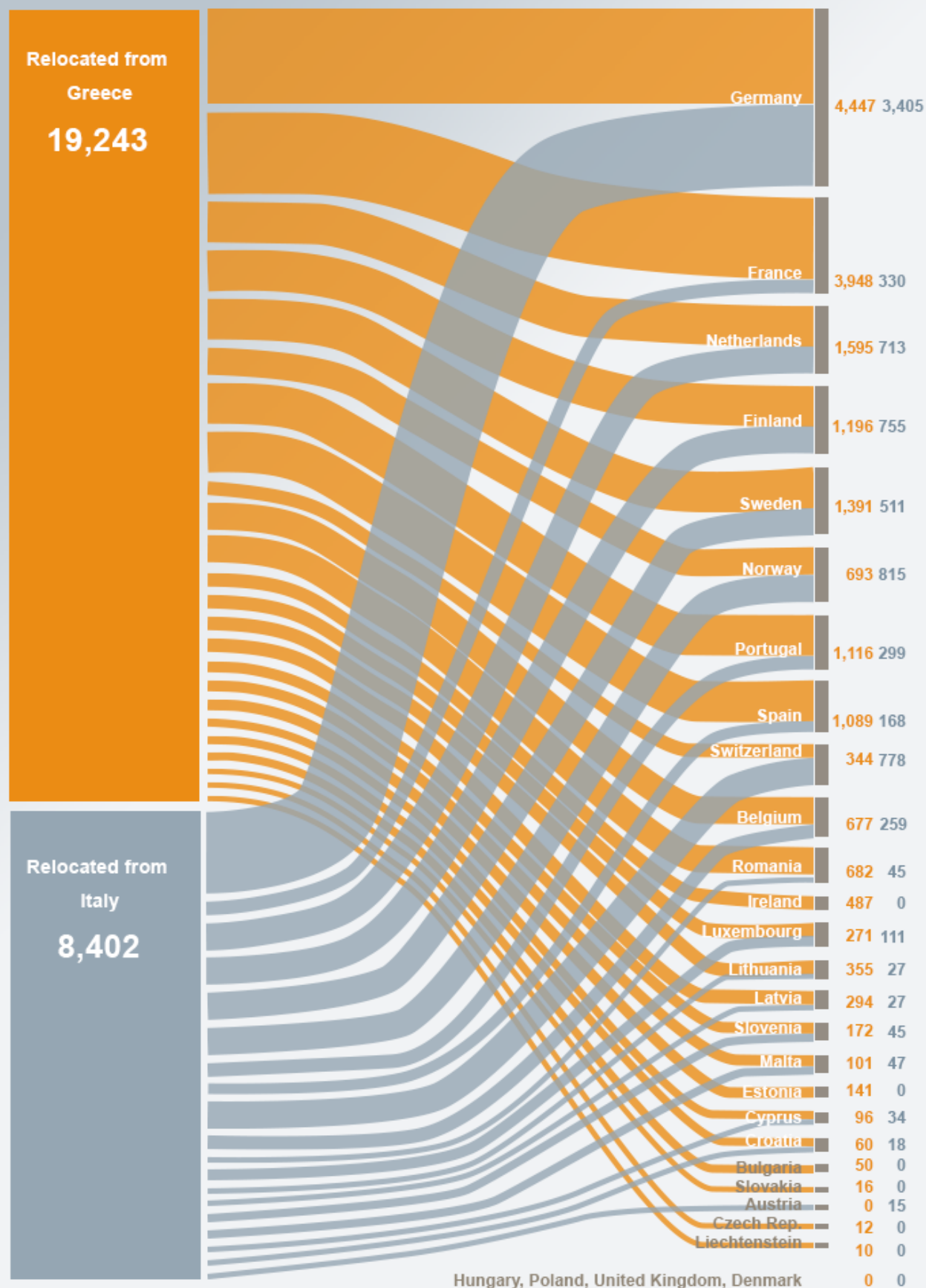
The three countries, however, claim that Brussels is attempting to interfere with their national sovereignty. They could face heavy fines if they do not comply with any court ruling on their duty to accept refugees.

The refugee relocation scheme has been mostly unsuccessful in the two-and-a-half years since it was adopted. As of last week, only around 32,000 refugees had been relocated as part of the program.

The continued disagreement over the refugee quota scheme has hampered attempts to reform the EU’s asylum policy, with EU leaders set to address the issue at a summit in Brussels on December 14-15.

## EU relocations of asylum seekers since September 2015

The EU's relocation and resettlement scheme pledged to move a total of 160,000 migrants from Greece and Italy to other EU countries. This graphic shows how many have been moved, and where, so far.



## **Poland says it's ready to defend position**

Following the European Commission's declaration Thursday, Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Konrad Szymanski said his government was ready to defend its decision to refuse migrants before the ECJ.

Poland's ruling populist Law and Justice (PiS) party has long insisted that it will not admit migrants from Africa and the Middle East, citing security concerns following a spate deadly Islamist attacks in western Europe, as well as problems associated with determining the identify of migrants.

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"No one will lift the duty of providing public safety from the Polish government," Szymanski told state news agency PAP.



Greece and Italy have been stretched to breaking point with huge numbers of refugee arrivals

## **Hungary also in the dock for NGO, education reforms**

The European Commission on Thursday also announced that it was also taking Hungary to court for additional breaches of EU laws.

Recent reforms concerning foreign-funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and universities have drawn major ire from Brussels. Thursday's



announcement came after the ECJ said Hungary's conservative government, led by Viktor Orban, had failed to satisfy the Commission's concerns on the two issues.

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Under the new NGO reforms, organizations receiving over €24,000 (\$28,293) of foreign financing have to register as "civic organizations funded from abroad." The new education law, meanwhile, changes the requirements for foreign universities, forcing them to have run operations in their home country to also run in Hungary. The Commission found that the act "disproportionately restricts" an institution's operations and runs counter to the right to academic freedom.

The new laws are widely seen as a government bid to curtail the influence of Hungarian-born financier George Soros, who founded the Central European University in Budapest and whose Open Society Foundations includes a number NGOs.

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Source: <http://www.dw.com/en/eu-sues-czech-republic-hungary-and-poland-over-low-refugee-intake/a-41691870>

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