EUROPE BRIBES TURKEY

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Guy Verhofstadt, Politico, 1 December 2015

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The summit committed the EU to an "initial" sum of €3 billion, to support Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. However, it is not clear what support Turkey will provide to the refugees thanks to this money, or whether it will finally open its job market and provide schools and education to hundreds of thousands of Syrian children.

In return for our money, Turkey has agreed, starting in June 2016, to take back those migrants who are not in need of international protection, and who came to the EU through Turkish territory. If the aim is to "stem the flow," this is a deeply flawed approach, as the number of people streaming into the EU who are not in need of international protection is extremely low.

The vast majority of people arriving are Syrians who will not be taken back by Turkey. It is thus highly unlikely that the numbers coming will be reduced. Indeed, the prime minister of Turkey stated at the post-summit press conference that he could not guarantee any reduction in the number of refugees arriving in Greece. One might therefore question the underlying logic behind the whole exercise.

It is, of course, also true that illegal migrants can only be returned to Turkey if they actually stay on Greek territory and don't move onward. But the reality of our nonexistent or dysfunctional entry "hotspots" mean the vast majority of people who could be returned to Turkey — based on the valid Greek-Turkish readmission agreement — move on northward into other EU countries before any return can be administratively arranged.

Statistics from the Greek police show that while Turkey agreed to take back more than 2,300 illegal migrants this year, only eight people were returned, as the rest had left Greece. Once the illegal migrants cross the Western Balkans, they cannot be returned to Turkey as the EU-Turkey readmission agreement doesn't apply there.

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