



## BRIEFING PAPER

Number 7430, 11 December 2015

# The EU's response to the migration crisis: recent developments

By Ben Smith and  
Melanie Gower

### Inside:

1. Recent progress implementing the European Agenda on Migration
2. The EU military operation to stop smugglers in the Mediterranean



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Recent progress implementing the European Agenda on Migration</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 European Agenda on Migration	4
1.2 What progress has been made on the key measures?	6
1.3 Recent summits	9
1.4 Recent Parliamentary scrutiny	11
<b>2. The EU military operation to stop smugglers in the Mediterranean</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Stage 1 of EUNAVFOR MED	12
2.2 Stage 2 of EUNAVFORMED and the deployment of HMS Richmond	12
2.3 Security Council resolution	13
2.4 Latest on the operation	13
2.5 European Scrutiny Committee	14

## Summary

On 13 May the European Commission published a '[European Agenda on Migration](#)'. At an informal meeting on 23 September, they endorsed a list of [priority actions to implement the Agenda on Migration over the next six months](#). The actions encompassed operational, budgetary, legal and legislative measures.

Some of the key measures being taken in response to the immediate pressures being faced by Member States include:

- Establishing "hotspots" in frontline Member States to ensure effective reception and registration processes
- Plans to relocate 160,000 asylum seekers likely to be in need of international protection, away from frontline countries to other Member States, over the next two years
- Offering resettlement to 20,000 refugees currently outside the EU, over the next two years, in individual Member States

A previous Library briefing, [Migration pressures in Europe](#), has further background.

Some progress has been made over the past three months, although the commitments made by Member States so far have not fully covered the identified needs. Relatively few refugees have been relocated or resettled so far. The UK supports the hotspots approach, but is not participating in the relocation proposals.

EU leaders continue to hold regular meetings on the migration crisis, including with third countries. November's Valletta Summit on migration between EU heads of state/government and African leaders resulted in a political statement and agreement to implement an Action Plan on migration. EU leaders have also recently agreed to a Joint Action Plan on Migration with Turkey.

The second, active phase of the EU's military operation against people smuggling in the Mediterranean, *Operation Sophia* (previously EUNAVFOR MED), began on 7 October.

The UK offered to deploy the Type-23 frigate HMS Richmond to the EU naval force, together with its organic Lynx helicopter, a Royal Marines boarding party and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle for enhanced surveillance.

As at 10 November, the UK government said that the operation had "disposed of around 40 migrant boats" and had identified 42 suspected smugglers for the Italian authorities to pursue further investigations.

There will be a third stage to the operation, the disruption phase, involving disposal of vessels and related assets, preferably before use, and apprehending traffickers and smugglers.

The European Scrutiny Committee has identified various documents relating to the EU's response to the migration crisis (including Operation Sophia) as politically important, and recommended them for debates on the floor of the House. Two related motions have been tabled for debate on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December.

# 1. Recent progress implementing the European Agenda on Migration

## 1.1 European Agenda on Migration

On 13 May the European Commission published a '[European Agenda on Migration](#)'. It included some immediate proposed actions to prevent more deaths in the Mediterranean, which centred around:

- Extending the remit and resourcing of border surveillance and rescue operations in the Mediterranean ('Triton' and 'Poseidon') for 2015 and 2016
- Developing an emergency relocation mechanism to help Member States faced with a sudden influx of migrants
- Developing proposals for an EU-wide refugee resettlement scheme to offer 20,000 places to people currently outside the EU's borders
- Working on a Common Security and Defence Policy operation in the Mediterranean, to break up trafficking networks, in accordance with international law.

The proposals received a mixed response from EU leaders. Proposals to redistribute refugees between Member States have proved particularly controversial.

On 27 May 2015, the European Commission presented [more detailed proposals for the immediate measures](#), which would be taken forward in the first implementation phase for the Agenda.<sup>1</sup> EU Heads of State considered the Commission's proposals at a [European Council meeting on 25 – 26 June](#). After difficult discussions, they agreed to take forward work in parallel in three broad areas:

- Relocation/resettlement
- Return/readmission/reintegration
- Cooperation with countries of origin and transit

EU leaders continue to hold regular meetings on the migration crisis.

At an informal meeting on 23 September, they endorsed a list of [priority actions to implement the Agenda on Migration over the next six months](#). The actions encompassed operational, budgetary, legal and legislative measures.

---

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, *press release*, '[European Commission makes progress on Agenda on Migration](#)', IP/15/5039, 27 May 2015

**Box 1: Priority actions to implement the Agenda on Migration over the next six months, endorsed on 23 September**

**Operational actions:**

- Full roll-out of the Relocation Scheme and Migration Management Support Teams working in 'hotspot' areas
- Member States to make use of existing measures by activating the Civil Protection Mechanism and deploying Rapid border intervention teams.
- Normalisation of the Schengen area and lifting temporary internal border controls.
- Stepping up the diplomatic offensive and intensifying cooperation with third countries

**Budgetary support:**

- Increasing the emergency funding for the most affected Member States by €100 million for 2015.
- As from 2015, increase the capacity of the three key EU agencies with a 120 additional posts.
- Increasing the emergency funding for the most affected Member States and the funding for Frontex, EASO and Europol by €600 million for 2016.
- Member States should restore funding for food aid via the World Food Programme to 2014 levels. In addition, €200 million in EU funds for humanitarian aid will be mobilised in 2015 for direct support to refugees.
- Increasing humanitarian aid by €300 million in 2016 to be ready to help refugees' essential needs like food and shelter.
- Supporting the Trust Fund for Syria up to more than €500 million from the EU budget, to be matched by Member States.
- Overhaul the allocation of EU funds (up to €1billion) for refugee-related actions for Turkey. Mobilising €17 million for Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

**Implementation of EU law:**

- Full and swift implementation by Member States of EU law in the area of asylum and migration.
- Restoring normalcy and taking all measures in Greece needed so that Dublin transfers to Greece can be reinstated within six months

**Further legislation:**

- Ambitious steps towards establishing a European Border and Coast Guard and extension of the Frontex mandate (December 2015)
- Legal migration package including revision of Blue Card (March 2016)
- Further reform of the Dublin Regulation (March 2016)
- Proposal for a structured system on resettlement (March 2016)
- Updated strategy on human trafficking (March 2016)

## 1.2 What progress has been made on the key measures?

A [Commission Communication of 14 October](#) gave an update on the progress made against the priority actions. An accompanying press release summarised the key points, which included:

Concerning operational measures, the Communication mentions the progress made on the hotspots in Greece and Italy, the first relocations of asylum seekers, as well as return flights for irregular migrants with no right to stay. It also talks about preparations for resettlement of people in need of international protection directly from third countries. The first Syrian refugees have already been resettled to Italy, the Czech Republic and Liechtenstein.

Member States are asked to send national experts to support the work in the hotspots, notify the Commission of their reception capacities, and identify the national contact points for relocations with Greece and Italy as well as for resettlement.

In terms of budgetary support, the Commission has already proposed amendments to its 2015 and 2016 budgets, boosting the resources devoted to the refugee crisis by €1.7 billion. This means that the Commission will spend €9.2 billion in total on the refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016. Member States must now deploy national spending to match. The Commission is still waiting for a large number of Member States to match EU funding for the UNHCR, World Food Programme, the EU Regional Trust Fund for Syria and the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

Member States must also ensure proper implementation of EU law. The Common European Asylum System is based on helping people in need of international protection and returning migrants who have no right to stay on EU territory. These rules have to be properly applied. The Commission has not yet received replies to the 40 letters it sent to Member States in September, in addition to the 34 already pending cases, on potential or actual infringements of EU asylum legislation on 23 September.

The Commission is also working intensely with Greece to ensure that its reception capacities are improved, and that conditions will be met for the reinstatement of Dublin transfers to Greece. Regarding the temporary reintroduction of border controls by Germany, Austria and Slovenia, the Commission will continue to closely monitor the situation, and believes that full implementation of the priority actions will allow a return to a fully functioning Schengen system in the months to come.

A European Commission press release, dated 9 December, gave a further update, summarising the [state of play in relation to measures to address the refugee crisis](#), with particular reference to financial pledges, relocation schemes, hotspots, returns, and support for countries triggering the EU civil protection mechanism.

### Establishing “hotspots” in Italy and Greece

First reception facilities (“hotspots”) are being established in Italy and Greece. These will ensure the swift identification, registration and fingerprinting of migrants, with support from staff from other Member States and European agencies. An update [as at 9 December](#) identifies the capacity within the proposed hotspots in Italy and Greece.

## 7 The EU's response to the migration crisis: recent developments

The hotspot approach, which the UK Government supports, is considered central to the objective of restoring the credibility and effective functioning of the migration system. However, as emphasised in the Commission Communication update on 14 October, it is heavily reliant on offers of support and practical assistance from Member States:

The need for personnel and equipment was explicitly recognised at the informal meeting of EU Heads of State or Government in September – with a deadline of November to meet these needs. However, so far, the commitments made by Member States fall far short of the real needs. As of 8 October, only six Member States have responded to the call for contributions for EASO with 81 experts, out of the 374 needed. So far six Member States have responded to the call from Frontex with 48 border officials. Member States should rapidly submit their contributions to meet the Agencies' needs assessment.

### UK participation

The UK Government supports the hotspots approach. [As at 9 December](#), it had made 10 asylum experts and 29 border guards available.

### Emergency relocation of migrants

In order to reduce the pressure on the most affected Member States, the EU is seeking to relocate 160,000 irregular migrants from Italy, Greece (and potentially other frontline states) to have their asylum claims processed by other Member States over the next two years.

- An emergency scheme to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers with well-founded claims away from Italy and Greece to other Member States over the next two years, using an emergency clause (Article 78(3)) in the TFEU, was first proposed by the Commission in May.<sup>2</sup> The scheme is based on voluntary commitments by Member States. The Council Decision was adopted on 14 September 2015.
- An additional proposal, to relocate an additional 120,000 people from Italy, Greece and potentially other 'frontline states' over a two year period, was subsequently proposed by the Commission. It is to be based on mandatory quotas. The Council Decision was adopted on 22 September, against opposition from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Hungary and Slovakia have since initiated [legal challenges against the proposals](#).

The October Commission Communication document gave an indication of the cooperation required from participating Member States:

The first relocations of people in clear need of protection have taken place, but much work is still needed to ensure that a substantial flow of several hundreds of relocations per month quickly follows. All Member States were asked to identify national

---

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, *Proposal for a Council decision establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece*, 27 May 2015, [COM\(2015\) 286 final](#); European Commission, *fact sheet, 'First measures under the European Agenda on Migration: Questions and Answers'*, 27 May 2015

contact points at home: so far, 21 Member States have identified national contact points. They have also been asked to send liaison officers, if relevant, to Italy and Greece. So far, 22 Member States have dispatched such officers. An essential part of the relocation chain is that adequate reception capacity exists in the receiving Member States to accommodate the relocated persons. So far, only six Member States have notified this reception capacity they have made available to host relocated people.

Staff based in the Migration Management Support Teams working at the hotspots have a central role in facilitating relocations. The first relocations took place on 9 October. [As at 9 December](#), 130 refugees had been relocated from Italy and 30 had been relocated from Greece to six different Member States.

### **UK participation**

The UK is not participating in the relocation measures, due to exercising its 'opt-out' rights. The UK Government has consistently opposed the relocation proposals (whether voluntary or mandatory). It argues that relocation simply moves problems around Europe rather than addressing the underlying causes of the migration crisis, and that responses to the migration flows should seek to break the link between embarking on getting on boats and gaining permission to stay in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

### **Refugee resettlement**

All Member States (as well as the EEA states and Switzerland) have agreed to resettle 20,000 refugees living outside the EU in total, over the next two years. Priority will be given to refugees in North Africa, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. European funding will be available for participation in the scheme.

The European Commission had proposed a distribution mechanism to determine states' allocations (based on GDP, size of population, unemployment rate, and previous numbers of asylum seekers and resettled refugees). However this will not be used – instead, all states will participate through multilateral and national schemes, reflecting their specific situations.

22,505 resettlement spaces were pledged at the meeting of European Home Affairs Ministers on 20 July. Since this was greater than the original target, some of the extra places offered will be transferred to the relocation mechanism scheme instead. Norway pledged the most places (3,500), followed by France (2,375).

The first resettlements had taken place by the end of October: 132 Syrians were resettled in the Czech Republic, Italy and Liechtenstein. The Commission has requested Member States to inform it of their resettlement plans for the next six months.

---

<sup>3</sup> HL Deb 22 July 2015 c1202-7

## UK participation

When the resettlement plans were being discussed at the July meeting, the UK government said that it was anticipating resettling 2,200 refugees over the next couple of years through its existing schemes (Gateway, Mandate and the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme for Syrian nationals) and would not be taking on any additional obligations as a result of the EU's proposals. On 7 September the Prime Minister announced a [significant extension](#) of the resettlement scheme for Syrian nationals. The Government now intends to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK by the end of this Parliament in 2020.

## 1.3 Recent summits

### Meeting on Western Balkans migration route

Leaders of Western Balkans countries (Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia) agreed a 17-point plan of action [at a meeting](#) convened by the President of the European Commission on 25 October 2015.

The [resulting statement](#) recognised individual states' obligations under international refugee and EU law, and reaffirmed the importance of cooperation and cross-border collaboration between Member States and beyond:

The unprecedented flow of refugees and migrants along the Eastern Mediterranean-Western Balkans route is a challenge that will not be solved through national actions alone. Only a determined, collective cross-border approach in a European spirit, based on solidarity, responsibility, and pragmatic cooperation between national, regional and local authorities can succeed. Unilateral action may trigger a chain reaction. Countries affected should therefore talk to each other. Neighbours should work together along the route, as well as upstream with countries such as Turkey, as host to the largest number of refugees. This is the only way to restore stability to the management of migration in the region, ease the pressure on the overstretched capacity of the countries most affected, and to slow down the flows.

A ['State of Play' update](#), as of 29 October 2015, gives some information on progress made since the meeting.

### The Valletta summit on migration

The [Valletta summit on migration](#) had been proposed in April and took place between 11 – 12 November. EU and African leaders agreed on a [political declaration](#) and to implementing an [Action Plan](#). A further meeting is due to be scheduled by January 2017 in order to assess the progress made.

The Action Plan identifies sixteen priority initiatives to be launched by the end of 2016. The actions fall under five overarching priorities, which relate to:

- maximising the development benefits of migration and address root causes;

- better organising legal channels for migration and mobility;
- ensuring international protection for migrants and asylum seekers;
- intensifying the fight against criminal networks engaged in migrant smuggling and human trafficking,
- increasing cooperation on return and readmission.

In addition, a new '[EU Emergency Trust Fund](#) for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa' has been launched to help address the root causes of migration by promoting economic and equal opportunities, security and development. It is expected to primarily benefit countries in the Sahel region and Lake Chad area, the Horn of Africa, and the North of Africa, which are considered to reflect the major African migration routes to the Europe. As at 12 November, European Commission financing instruments had contributed €1.8 billion, and further contributions from 25 individual Member States and Norway and Switzerland amounted to around €81.3 million. A [factsheet on the Trust Fund](#) set out how it is intended to assist with the objectives of the European Agenda on Migration:

#### **How can the support help to deal with irregular migration and refugees?**

The European Agenda on Migration aims to prevent further loss of lives at sea and to reinforce overall cooperation with key countries of transit and origin. It also aims to tackle root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in countries of origin and transit, in particular by strengthening the rule of law, creating economic and education opportunities, and building better governance, and the effective sustainable return, readmission and reintegration of irregular migrants not qualifying for protection. This requires a firm commitment to supporting capacity building of third countries in the field of migration and border management, as well as to the stabilisation and development of these regions of Africa.

## **EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan**

Turkey is a major host country for refugees, and is also a crucial transit hub for onward migration to the EU through the Eastern Mediterranean route (entry via Greece, Bulgaria or Cyprus).

The migration crisis was one of the issues focussed on at a summit between EU heads of state/government and the Turkish Prime Minister on 29 November 2015. Leaders agreed to activate a [Joint Action Plan on migration](#) and [€3 billion of additional EU funding](#) is being provided to establish a 'refugee facility for Turkey'.<sup>4</sup>

The Action Plan identifies a range of areas for collaboration and cooperation between the EU and Turkey in response to the massive influx of Syrian refugees in need of protection. The actions fall under three themes:

---

<sup>4</sup> [Meeting of heads of state or government with Turkey - EU-Turkey statement](#), 29 November 2015

## 11 The EU's response to the migration crisis: recent developments

- Addressing the root causes of the Syrian influx
- Supporting Syrians and the host communities in Turkey
- Strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU

### 1.4 Recent Parliamentary scrutiny

The European Commission's proposals, and the Government's response, have been considered by two Parliamentary Committees:

- The [Lords EU Committee](#) suggested in July 2015 that the Government should consider participating in amended proposals for a voluntary emergency relocation scheme, arguing that "the UK has a responsibility to play its part".<sup>5</sup>
- The [European Scrutiny Committee published a report](#) on the European Commission's proposed European Agenda on Migration and associated documents on 31 July. It was deeply critical of the fact that the Government confirmed that it would not participate in the proposed relocation mechanism before Parliament had been given an opportunity to express a view on the matter, and recommended that the Government's decision be debated on the floor of the House in September. Several subsequent European Scrutiny Committee reports have considered related European documents, and there will be debate on the floor of the House on 14 December.
- The Home Affairs Committee is currently conducting an [inquiry into the migration crisis](#). It had previously looked at the issue of migratory pressures across the EU in a [report](#) published in March 2015.

The migration crisis has been debated in the House several times in recent months:

- [Adjournment debate](#) on the 'refugee situation in the Mediterranean', 16 June.
- [Emergency debate](#) on 'Refugee crisis in Europe', 8 September
- [SNP Opposition Day debate](#) on 'Humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean and Europe', 9 September<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Lords EU Committee, *The United Kingdom opt-in to the proposed Council decision on the relocation of migrants within the EU*, HL Paper 22, 15 July 2015

<sup>6</sup> [HC Deb 16 June 2015 c291-298](#) ; [HC Deb 8 September 2015 c245- 297](#); [HC Deb 9 September 2015 c412-505](#)

## 2. The EU military operation to stop smugglers in the Mediterranean

### 2.1 Stage 1 of EUNAVFOR MED

The MOD announced on 18 June that the multi-role survey vessel HMS Enterprise, along with a Merlin helicopter, would deploy as part of the EU NAVFORMED operation, replacing HMS Bulwark.

The MOD argued that HMS Enterprise will make a strong contribution to the operation:

HMS BULWARK must return to the UK for planned maintenance on 3 July 2015, and we took the decision on 18 June to replace her with HMS ENTERPRISE, which will be well suited to contribute to the broad maritime capabilities desired by the Operational Commander for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation. HMS ENTERPRISE will help to understand and build-up a picture of how the operation will go on to seize and disrupt the assets of smugglers. All ships involved in the CSDP operation will continue to respond to vessels in distress as is customary for all maritime vessels.<sup>7</sup>

HMS Enterprise has the capacity for up to 120 people.

On 9 September the MOD revealed that since being deployed HMS Enterprise had rescued 453 migrants, all over the weekend of 22-23 August.<sup>8</sup> On 19 September HM Enterprise rescued a further 377 migrants.

As of 22 September 2015 the Royal Navy had rescued a total of 5,577 migrants from the Mediterranean.

The net additional costs of deploying HMS Enterprise will be met from the Deployed Military Activity Pool (DMAP) within the MOD.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.2 Stage 2 of EUNAVFORMED and the deployment of HMS Richmond

The Council of Ministers met on 14 September 2015 to assess Stage One of the operation. Having concluded that the operation had fulfilled all of its military objectives the ministers decided to move to Stage Two: the boarding, search, seizure and diversion of suspicious vessels on the high seas.

A force generation conference, intended to identify suitable assets and national contributions, was held on 16 September. The UK offered to deploy the Type-23 frigate HMS Richmond to the EU naval force,

---

<sup>7</sup> [Written question - 3397, 25 June 2015](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Written question - 8772, 9 September 2015](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Written question - 7982, 7 September 2015](#)

## 13 The EU's response to the migration crisis: recent developments

together with its organic Lynx helicopter, a Royal Marines boarding party and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle for enhanced surveillance.<sup>10</sup>

On 28 September 2015 EUNAVFOR MED was renamed *Operation Sophia*, after the name given to the baby born on the ship that rescued her mother on 22 August.

On 7 October the second, active phase of the operation began.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3 Security Council resolution

On 9 October the UN Security Council adopted a resolution authorising member states to intercept and inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya.<sup>12</sup> Invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows states to take military action to resolve a threat to peace and security, the resolution also authorised the seizure of vessels suspected of involvement in people smuggling and the use of 'all necessary measures' to confront the smuggling. Any action must comply with international humanitarian law.

The mandate lasts for one year.

The internationally-recognised Libyan government, the one based in Tobruk, dropped its opposition to the EU's plan, which allowed the resolution to pass. Russia had previously stated that its support depended on acceptance by the Libyan government.

### 2.4 Latest on the operation

By 29 October, the Royal Navy announced that HMS Richmond and HMS Enterprise had rescued over 540 migrants.<sup>13</sup>

As at 10 November, the UK government said that the operation had "disposed of around 40 migrant boats,"<sup>14</sup> and had identified 42 suspected smugglers for the Italian authorities to pursue further investigations.<sup>15</sup>

There will be a third stage to the operation, the disruption phase, involving disposal of vessels and related assets, preferably before use, and apprehending traffickers and smugglers.

Thereafter mission will be completed and assets withdrawn.

---

<sup>10</sup> [Written question – 11684, 22 October 2015](#)

<sup>11</sup> ['EUNAVFOR Med: EU agrees to start the active phase of the operation against human smugglers and to rename it "Operation Sophia"',](#) EU Council press release, 28 September 2015

<sup>12</sup> ['Adopting Resolution 2240 \(2015\), Security Council Authorizes Member States to Intercept Vessels off Libyan Coast Suspected of Migrant Smuggling',](#) Security Council press release, 9 October 2015

<sup>13</sup> ['HMS Enterprise and HMS Richmond rescue over 540 migrants',](#) Royal Navy press release, 29 October 2015

<sup>14</sup> [Written question - HL3245,](#) 17 November 2015

<sup>15</sup> [Written question - HL3244,](#) 17 November 2015

## 2.5 European Scrutiny Committee

On 21 July 2015, the European Scrutiny Committee decided that the operation was politically important and should be debated on the Floor of the House of Commons.<sup>16</sup> The debate was scheduled for 14 December.

---

<sup>16</sup> [2nd Report - Commission Communication: European Agenda on Migration and associated documents](#) | [PDF version 2nd Report - Commission Communication: European Agenda on Migration and associated documents](#) (PDF) HC 342-ii | *Published 31 July 2015*

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

Disclaimer - This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).