

《European officials remain optimistic on controversial plan》

As refugees return to Turkey, the movement of migrants is subsiding in other places. But the migrant exchange plan is controversial. The Borders to the Balkans have been closed. And no refugees are entering Germany through Hungary. Some are wondering if the new plan is enough to make a difference.

A few months ago - this canteen would have been packed. Now just 50 migrants and refugees pass through this shelter each week. Since the closure of borders across the Balkans, centers like these around Germany, have had space to breathe.

"We have more time to do more work with the refugees - and spend more time with our consulting work - offering social help for them. Last year was more chaotic," said David Oertel, German refugee shelter manager.

No one knows if the lull will last. Europe's refugee deal with Turkey is now in effect. But the plan to save Europe's open borders is progressing slowly.

32 refugees arrived in Germany Monday by plane. In return, Ankara took back a few hundred failed asylum seekers from Greece.

The measures have been heavily criticized by rights groups. At a migration conference in Berlin, European officials remained optimistic.

"For the first time in such a long time, you could sense the political will to find joint solutions," said Martin Schulz, European Parliament President.

"Realism requires us to acknowledge that without Turkey we cannot find a solution - but this does not mean that in return, we would sell off our values."

Though there remains significant doubt among EU member states.

"we have spent 0.35% of our GDP on securing our border, and making sure we comply with the Schengen regulation," said Peter Szijjarto, Hungarian Foreign Minister.

"And now what we can say proudly to the German people: through the territory of Hungary, there are no migrants entering the territory of Germany. That, in my view, is the highest level of solidarity."

Not even those involved in brokering the EU-Turkey deal are pretending it's perfect - but many see it as the least worst option. On day one of what appears to be its partial implementation, though, there are signs it may still not be enough.

Attention is returning south. The French government believes up to 800 thousand people may be massing on the Libyan coast. That development is raising fears that Europe's only plan - may yet be another diversion.

