



GREEK ACTION PLAN ON ASYLUM AND MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

State of play 27.10.2011

Greece is committed to reform its asylum system following the three-year Action Plan on asylum and migration management adopted by the Greek Government in August 2010.

Significant progress has already been achieved with the implementation of all components of the Action Plan in a coherent and effective way and especially with regard to the reform of the asylum procedures and the establishment of an independent Asylum and a Reception Service

Due to constant inflows of illegal migrants in the Evros region (300 to 400 hundred persons per day), specific measures have been taken in order to address the situation there, with special focus in ameliorating living conditions in detention centers

The implementation of decisions taken is hindered by the current economic crisis and restraints in Greece which renders it difficult to engage national financial means and to employ new personnel.

Concerns of the local community with regard to establishment of reception/detention facilities in their region must be also taken into account.

GREEK ACTION PLAN COMPONENTS

- A. Reform of Asylum procedures and creation of a new Asylum Service.
- B. Establishment of Centres for the reception, identification and screening.
- C. Improvement of facilities in reception centres for asylum applicants/vulnerable groups and minors.
- D. Improvement of available and creation of new detention centres.
- E. Provision of services.
- F. Improvement of forced/voluntary return policies.

A) Reform of Asylum procedures and creation of a new Asylum Service

- A new Asylum Service, with civil personnel, has been established.
- The Director of the service has been appointed.
- The process for the staffing of the Central Service and the Appeals Authority is actively pursued with transfers of civil servants.
- The building to host the Central Service and the Appeals Authority is currently being refurbished.
- The legislation regarding the organization and operation of the Service, including its Internal Regulation and Service Flowchart, has been completed and approval is pending.

A) Reform of Asylum procedures and creation of a new Asylum Service

- The international protection recognition rate, which was extremely low (<1%) in previous years, has currently reached an average of **12,35%**.
- A Country of Origin Information Database has been set up in cooperation with UNHCR. All asylum officers and the Appeal Committees have access to that Database.
- Training of all staff involved is carried out in cooperation with UNHCR.
- Interpretation is provided with the use of interpreters from the pool of specialized NGOs.
- The Tele/Video Conference Interpretation System is being used.
- An information leaflet for asylum applicants in 14 languages was produced, in cooperation with UNHCR.
- Information on the asylum procedure in Greek, English, French and Arabic is available at the Citizen's Protection Ministry website (www.mocp.gr).

A) Reform of Asylum procedures and creation of a new Asylum Service

- The transitional asylum procedure (until the new Asylum Service is fully operational) is running already since the beginning of 2011.
- 10 Appeal Committees have been established. The initial five (5) Committees are comprised by a civil servant as President, a member appointed by UNHCR and a member appointed by the National Committee for Human Rights and are operational since February 18th, 2011.
- Three (3) Committees are deciding on the pending appeals which have been submitted before 22-11-2010. 1.031 appellants have been invited for examination until September 16th, 2011.
- Two (2) Committees are deciding on the pending appeals which have been submitted after 22-11-2010. 757 appellants have been invited for examination until September 16th, 2011.
- Additionally, five (5) more Appeal Committees were established during September 2011.
- The active appeals have been cleared resulting in a decreased number of active cases (38.100) which is expected to decrease further.

B) Establishment of centres for the Reception, Identification and Screening

- A First Reception Service, with civil personnel, has been established.
- The Director of the Service has been appointed.
- The process for the staffing of the Service is actively pursued with transfers of civil servants from other Ministries.
- The building to host the Service in Athens is currently being refurbished.
- The legislation regarding the organization and operation of the Service, including its Internal Regulation and Service Flowchart, has been completed.
- The new Service has already taken up its tasks regarding the establishment of new first reception centers.
- The technical requirements for the First Reception Centres and for pre-return detention centres have been completed by a working group of the Ministry of Citizen Protection and the EASO Asylum Support Teams.

C) Improvement of facilities in reception centres for asylum applicants/vulnerable groups and minors
D) Improvement of available and creation of new detention centres.

- * An area of app. 20.000 sq. meters, neighboring the existing facility in Fylakio (Kyprinos, Evros), has been acquired. The site will be used for the construction of a reception/detention facility with capacity of 400 persons.
- * Legal procedures are under way for the establishment of a Multi-Purpose Centre in Evros where the local First Reception Service, Asylum Service, Frontex, Police Authorities and Border Guard shall be accommodated.
- * A new detention facility with capacity for 87 persons is being constructed at Ferres (total budget of 2,5 million €, co-funded under the 2009-2010 External Border Fund (EBF) program). The facility is expected to be operational before the end of 2011.

C) Improvement of facilities in reception centres for asylum applicants/vulnerable groups and minors

D) Improvement of available and creation of new detention centres.

- Refurbishment and repairs (mainly in the plumbing and sewage system) have taken place in existing facilities in Evros (Fylakio D.C, Orestiada Border Police Station (B.P.S), Didimoticho B.P.S.).
- An additional amount of 844,538 € is available for further refurbishment and repairs in Fylakio and the B.P.S. of Soufli and Tycherio. The procurement procedure is in its final phase and works are expected to start shortly. Construction works will be concluded within 4 months.
- Smaller amounts for construction works in Metaxades and N. Vyssa B.P.S. (64,000 €) and for Orestiada B.P.S. (70,000 €) have also been secured under the E.B.F. program.
- The contract for cleaning services has been extended to include daily cleaning of the wards and the latrines on a daily basis (since October 2011).
- At least one (1) ward is reserved for females and one (1) ward for unaccompanied minors in Fylakio D.C. Ferres B.P.S. is reserved for females.
- In Fylakio D.C. where women are routinely detained, the presence of female police officers is secured in all shifts.

C) Improvement of facilities in reception centres for asylum applicants/vulnerable groups and minors

- Accommodation capacity for unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers is sustained and increased with co-funding by the ERF.
- Funding for the operation of 7 shelters and 14 autonomous apartments continued.
- The set up of 3 new shelters and 3 autonomous apartments is also funded (Total budget under the Emergency 2010 ERF program: 2,185,985 €, Beneficiaries: 615).
- Asylum seekers have benefited from rent subsidy over a period of 4 months (Total budget under the Emergency 2010 ERF program: 568,000 €)
- Standard Operating Procedures are developed for shelters accommodating asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors, in cooperation with UNHCR.
- Support was provided to service providers to introduce set standards and regularly monitor reception conditions (Budget under the Emergency 2010 ERF program: 204,985 €).

E) Provision of services.

- Medical and psychosocial support services are being offered by the Health District and the Greek Center for Disease Control and Prevention (under the supervision of the Ministry of Health) and with co-funding from the European Refugee Fund (ERF). Currently, 4 medical doctors, 6 nurses, 1 psychologist, 2 social workers, 5 interpreters, 1 administrator and 2 drivers are deployed in Evros D.C. and B.P.C.
- During August and September, the provision of medical and psychosocial support was covered by the organisation Doctors without Borders, under a memorandum of understanding which the organisation has signed with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Citizen's Protection.
- The same organization has been covering the provision of non food items (eg. more than 10,000 sleeping bags and 14,000 hygiene kits have been distributed).
- Legal aid to asylum applicants is provided by the Greek Council of Refugees' Teams in Evros region (Action co-funded by E.R.F. 2010).

E) Provision of services.

- The set up of a referrals/coordination unit in the National Center for Social Solidarity (supervised by the Ministry of Health) is being implemented and financed under the State budget.
- Medical and psychosocial services have been provided by deployed medical units (NGOs and KEELPNO) to vulnerable populations (mainly asylum seekers).
- More than 15,000 beneficiaries have been recorded in Athens, Thessaloniki, Northern Aegean, Patra and Igoumenitsa, until June 2011 (Co-funded under the Emergency 2010 ERF).

E) Provision of services.

- Vulnerable persons (families with young children, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic conditions, elderly) are detained for the shortest period possible only until their registration is completed.
- To avoid overcrowding aliens from countries where their return is unlikely are in priority released.
- An intervention aiming to strengthen the process of minors' identification at arrival and to ensure their efficient referral to care, the asylum process and special shelters is in place in Fylakio D.C., since the summer of 2011, by the NGO Arsis.
- The Memorandum of Cooperation between the European Economic Area (E.O.A) and Greece is going to be signed within the following weeks.
- The funding (20.873.417 euros) will be used, especially, for the coverage of immediate needs of vulnerable groups and unaccompanied minors , accommodation, voluntary returns and UNHCR funding to support to the Greek Authorities.

F) Improvement of forced/voluntary return policies

- The Voluntary Returns Programme implemented by the Greek Police in cooperation with I.O.M. is continued.
- Voluntary Returns (including reintegration measures):
Annual Programme 2009, total budget 1.750.000 €
Returned citizens: 1.100 persons (200 persons above expectations)
- Annual Programme 2010, total budget 5.000.000 €
Estimated number 2.200 persons to be returned until 6/2012
- Target group: Citizens of Afghanistan, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria etc.
- An Agency was created for the Management of European and Development Programs (EBF and Return Fund).

- The abovementioned measures indicate a constant improvement in asylum and migration management in Greece.
- The problem can never be fully resolved if the influx of migrants continuous at its current numbers (300 to 400 persons per day), adding everyday a significant burden on management needs for the Greek administration
- Measures should be taken at European level to ensure cooperation of neighboring countries (namely Turkey) in controlling the transit of migrants towards the EU and readmitting third country nationals who have entered EU through their territory.