

## Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs visits Lesvos on the occasion of EEA Grants funding for the island's First Reception Center

**Ms Aspaker, the Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs, visited the island of Lesvos on 25<sup>th</sup> February to reiterate the firm commitment of Norway to the alleviation of the current refugee crisis in Greece. Lesvos, the island mostly hit by the unprecedented influx of migrants throughout 2015, will receive €2.015.540,00 under EEA Grants Programme GR06 to cover for the operational costs of the First Reception Center from March 2016 to April 2017.**

As Europe has witnessed the largest migration flows since World War II, Greece has been at the spotlight as the main entry point of almost 1,000,000 migrants and asylum seekers during 2015. This has put enormous pressure on the asylum system in Greece. For its part, EEA Grants greatly contribute in helping to establish a well-functioning migration and asylum system in Greece. Programme GR06, operated by the European and Development Programs Division (EDPD), Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction, is in conformity with the objectives of the Asylum and Migration Management System by creating screening Centers, accommodation for vulnerable groups and provision of services.

'Through the EEA and Norway Grants, we can help to establish proper systems to ensure that refugees seeking entry to Europe receive protection. I am confident that the planned projects will help to strengthen the Greek reception system, which is facing major challenges,' said Ms Aspaker.



Throughout her visit to Lesvos, Ms Aspaker was accompanied by the Director of EDPD Police Brigadier General Mr. MARKETAKIS Panagiotis, visited the First Reception Center in Moria where she had the chance to speak with some unaccompanied minors hosted in the FRC and several migration management stakeholders such as FRS staff, Hellenic Police officers, municipality employees and UNHCR or NGO volunteers. She was then toured at the premises of Kara Tepe area and inside the Rescue vessel "Peter Henry von Koss" accompanied by a representative of the Hellenic Coast guard.



'I am impressed by Greek efforts in Lesvos' said Ms Aspaker and expressed her commitment to 'strengthening Norway's contributions to the refugee crisis.' Additionally, Ms Aspaker expressed her sincere gratitude regarding the proper preparation of her visit by the EDPD, whereas the Norwegian Embassy also expressed its warm thanks. The Norwegian Government is currently using approximately €25 million to strengthen the Greek migration management. 'Migration will be a priority issue in the negotiations later this year on how the Grants are to be used in the funding period from 2014 to 2021,' said Ms Aspaker.