



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Task Force Migration Management

**4<sup>TH</sup> MIGRATION MANAGEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
20 JANUARY 2021**

**MINUTES**

**1. Asylum Procedures (Greek Asylum Service)**

On 19 January, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum published the asylum statistical report for December, which includes the asylum statistics that the Taskforce had requested, providing for a much more comprehensive picture of the asylum front. GAS representative Mr. [REDACTED] informed that by the end of 2020, they completed **81 052 end-of process cases and 40 559 registrations**.

Since March, the backlog has steadily decreased, standing at 76 335 pending cases at 1<sup>st</sup> instance by the end of December 2020 (39.5% reduction compared to January 2020), of which 18 988 are pending registrations and 57 347 pending decisions. It is worth mentioning that out of the 76 335 pending cases, 20 134 (11 668 decisions and 8 466 registrations) concern new cases that were introduced into the system as of 1 January 2020. This demonstrates a significant reduction of the backlog of old cases (before 2020) by 70% for registrations and 47% for decisions compared to the end of 2019.

Since 2020 cases had to be prioritized according to the new law and despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, GAS managed **to process 71%** (28 871) of all registered applications in 2020 (40 559). With regard to 2<sup>nd</sup> instance procedures, the Appeals Committees issued 25 013 decisions in 2020, the majority of which are in consonance with their corresponding 1<sup>st</sup> instance decisions. For both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> instance procedures, there has been a 43% reduction of the backlog by the end of 2020.

All pending interviews under the border procedure have been finalized on all islands, with the exception of Samos, the backlog of which should be finalized by the end of January 2021. Of the pending 432 interviews on Samos, 118 concern non-traceable applicants and 98 applicants with rare languages, whom GAS is currently trying to accommodate. GAS is working closely with the department of statistics to provide more details on productivity and deliver median processing times in 2020. The movement of GAS to Kerani has freed space for the RAO and increased capacity for interviews and in parallel, the new EASO Operating Plan will allow for a reinforcement of Project North in the mainland with the deployment of caseworkers from the islands, as well as the

creation of a new project, 'Project South', in order to accommodate the interview needs of south mainland Greece. The representative of the EC welcomed this progress and the significant developments in GAS. The director, Mr. [REDACTED] informed that a detailed presentation on the digitalization of the asylum procedures will take place in the next Steering Committee.

- Mandatory legal information at first instance; legal aid and representation at second instance and for detainees

There are 80 lawyers in the legal aid registry. This is set and funded through AMIF (legal aid for 2<sup>nd</sup> instance). There is no legal aid at 1<sup>st</sup> instance as this is provided by UNHCR. PAAYPA is in the process of renewal by IDIKA. A tender on the 54 caseworkers will be launched as soon as possible.

COM asked for a plan on the legal aid as per the EU directives to ensure that detainees have access to legal aid and that legal information is provided at 1<sup>st</sup> instance as there are gaps by UNHCR in this respect.

GAS confirmed that in cooperation with SSUAMs and EASO have started an exercise on the registration of homeless UAMs and this is a priority. One of the pillars of the EASO OP was the transfer of EASO caseworkers from the islands to the Project South but also for the homeless UAMs registration.

## **2. Migration management on the islands (other than Lesvos) and in the mainland**

### **2.1. Health (18:15 - 18:25) (Ministry of Health & EODY, IOM)**

- COVID-19: state of play regarding impact on migrant population, measures and vaccination scheme.

EODY informed that COVID testing for all field staff working in sites has started with hundreds of tests already conducted in various sites. Also, a sample of approximately 5% of the migrant population will also be COVID tested. EODY also informed that the vaccinations of the migrant population will take place according to the overall planning of the government starting with the elderly. UNHCR urged the authorities to prioritize also the vulnerable persons and those in high risk areas including the quarantine areas of Megala Therma and Karatepe.

IOM informed that the Austrian tender for lab equipment and supplies is not closed and the results as well as a timeline for delivery will be shared next week.

EODY informed that all staff working in RICs and LTACs will be tested for covid regularly (at least once a week) and confirmed that there have not been many COVID cases across the camps. The vaccination has started for the persons above 85 yo (so far there is no one in the camps belonging to this age group). For the time being the migrant

population will fall under the general vaccination plan getting assistance and information when needed.

UNHCR said that there are still about 200 vulnerable persons on the islands and suggested prioritising their vaccination.

- Deployment of medical staff and mobile units

EODY had initially advertised 103 jobs for doctors, while right now 25 are deployed through the PHILOS project and 21 under the EODY until the end of 2021. EODY is expecting that the electronic platform will be ready in the next few weeks and they will reopen 78 doctor positions for immediate recruitment to cover the needs until the end of 2021. The discussion on the plans for 2022 is ongoing.

- ESI projects on COVID-19 (DG HOME)

In the case of the European Support Instrument project on the enhancement of medical capacities in the reception system, the European Commission informed the Greek Authorities that the relevant documentation which will allow the continuation of the procedure with the drafting and the submission of the application with the funding request is under revision and that it will be shared on the week of 25 January 2021 with the beneficiaries.

- Bilateral help/actions (IOM)

The EC requested from IOM an overview of the ongoing bilateral support from other Member States in the area of healthcare of migrants.

## **2.2. Reception conditions and reception capacity (18:25 - 18:50) (RIS)**

- Reception strategy and contingency plans and overall presence in camps

RIS presented overall statistics on reception and arrivals. According to these statistics, more than 10 000 recognized refugees are still in the reception system. Statistics also show a sharp decrease of arrivals on the islands, and today arrivals from the land border are several times higher than arrivals through the islands.

Regarding living conditions, they also informed that during the bad weather conditions of the last days the only place that faced problems was the New Malakasa camp, where they had to move around 250 persons from tents to hotels. In the meantime, rub halls are being installed, so that these persons do not have to return to tents. There was no snow on the island RICs. On Samos about 200 persons were moved to heated places. On Chios nobody showed up after a call for moving RIC residents to heated containers.

- Winterisation (islands and mainland), replacement of tents by containers (including procurement of containers)

RIS confirmed that improvement works in all places are ongoing and that there was no gap in NFIs. In Sintiki the containers are in place and people have moved in.

- Progress on improvement of reception conditions in all facilities (including health, food, security and safety, internet, etc.)

RIS confirmed that a tender on internet is ongoing to finish by end of next week and so far there is only one bidder. The contract is expected to be in place by end of February. There is a 6-month implementation period, so the plan will start being deployed in the RICs. The plan includes the installation of cameras, Wi-Fi etc. Current agreement with COM is until end of January, so an extension will be requested. BG reminded that there is not much funds available, as we are still using the 2020 remainders and there is no access to the 2021 funds yet. She suggested that the Greek authorities also look into the Vodafone announcement for free internet to those in need.

### Islands

- New RIC on Samos, envisaged date of operation

They are waiting for approval by the Samos municipality for the placement of stores in the new Samos RIC. There is no discussion for other places e.g. on Kos they refused having stores in the RIC.

- Transfers to the mainland

### Mainland

- Increase of reception capacity in the mainland

The Ministry successfully managed to phase out Filoxenia II accommodation project for the asylum seekers and is currently working to expand the capacity of ESTIA programme as well as reallocate more efficiently the migrant population in mainland sites. The Secretary General also noted that Skaramangas, one of the biggest sites in Greece, will need to be evacuated at some point and alternative accommodation will need to be secured.

- Site Management Support (IOM)

IOM has submitted all plans for site expansions and waiting for authorisation for the expansions in N. Kavala, Koutsohero, Diavata, Samos, Korinthos and Katsikas. They are closing the tender for the fences, they are in the phase of purchasing containers (tender is over and they are processing the applications) and installing rubhalls. Another call will be published by the Greek authorities soon for all remaining camps.

All operations continue uninterrupted in all camps despite the harsh weather conditions. However, due to the low temperatures and heavy snowfall in the last few days approximately 250 migrants accommodated in Malakasa 2 were transferred to a hotel for a couple of weeks until winterised rubhalls are installed.

The Secretary General reiterated the progress achieved in establishing the legal framework of the mainland sites and undertaking the site management and the willingness to continue working towards a full handover of management and services in all mainland sites. However, he cautioned that the current timeline due to the completion of the SMS 2021 by June 2021 is unrealistic and a full handover by IOM to RIS can only be achieved when RIS has adequate manpower and expertise. In the meantime, three framework contracts are under preparation for catering, cleaning and security.

IOM is proceeding with works in the sites and has submitted all studies for expansion of sites to the technical department of RIS and is awaiting further instructions.

- Exits and transition of beneficiaries of international protection

- FILOXENIA II / HELIOXENIA (IOM)

The Head of the Task Force, Mrs Gminder commended the Greek authorities for closing Filoxenia II at the end of 2020. The European Commission informed that the Evaluation Committee has positively assessed the request for extension of the project until the end of February 2021. IOM informed that there are about 3000 people in Helioxenia and are in the process of exiting them by end of February 2021 (i.e. by the end of the programme). They also mentioned the ongoing tenders and will inform about their results next week. They are also waiting for the results of the discussion on the project with Slovakia concerning the medical containers and their installation before launching the relevant tenders.

- ESTIA (accommodation, cash, exits) (MoMA Sec Gen Reception)

RIS informed that there are overall 28 000 places (23 000 in addition to the untransitionable places) in ESTIA and MoMA are making efforts to fill the empty places.

### **2.3. Unaccompanied Minors (18:50 - 19:00) (Sp.Sec.UAMs & MoL / EKKA)**

- Guardianship

SSUAMs informed that they are working on the legislative amendments for the transfer of guardianship to MoMA.

EKKA informed that there was an agreement between them and Metadrasi regarding the implementation of the interim guardianship scheme which will last 8 months while preparing for the permanent scheme. Metadrasi is in the process of selecting the suitable future guardians. EKKA estimates that the first 40 guardians (for more than 800 UAMs) will be deployed by beginning of February.

- Relocations

SSUAMs confirmed they have completed the workload for Germany, but face some difficulties with some countries to which the transfers are slow.

### **2.4. Integration (19:00 – 19:15) (Sec Gen Migration Policy)**

Mr [REDACTED] (Director of Social Integration) informed about the latest meetings that took place in the context of Helios and about the progress made as regards other projects the ministry is implementing or designing: a) the Technical Assistance with the support of DG REFORM in order to develop a coherent and holistic programme on integration, b) the Action launched by the AMIF with the aim to enhance interculturalism and to launch an awareness campaign (1mln budget) and c) the submission of a proposal under the Recovery Fund, related to the access of recognised refugees into the labour market in close collaboration with OAED (Greek Manpower Employment Organization).

IOM will submit next week the request for extension of Helios until end of June 2021 (whereby the target of beneficiaries is expected to reach 18 000).

### **3. Joint Pilot Lesvos (19:15 - 19:40) (MoMA TF and DG HOME TF)**

- Winterisation and WASH facilities in the Mavrovouni site

The director of the Technical Department, Mr. [REDACTED], informed about the progress in the works in Mavrovouni. Mrs Gminder confirmed that the site withstood the difficult weather conditions of the last days.

UNICEF informed about the tenders on water and sewage. The procurement of 232 containers with showers and toilets will finish beginning of February. BG asked UNICEF to accelerate if possible the tender.

- Health of migrant population and COVID measures
- New Reception and Identification Centre on Lesvos
- Activation and operationalisation of MoU (Lesvos Coordination Group, etc.)

### **4. Financial Situation 2021 (19:40 – 19:55) (MoMA/RA and DG HOME)**

- State of play of AMIF National Programme 2014-2020 (implementation and absorption rates)

The Director of the Responsible Authority Mrs [REDACTED] confirmed that the absorption rate under the Greek National Programme is considered satisfactory and the planning is being implemented. The European Commission thanked the Responsible Authority for the submission of the Financial Plan 2021 on 31 December 2021 and anticipated the submission of the revised version which would address the comments shared.

Furthermore, Mrs Gminder reiterated the changes on the new legal framework on the restrictive definition of the Emergency Assistance which will only address exceptional emergency situation in the next MFF. Therefore the majority of the projects will have to be moved and taken over by the National Programmes (AMIF, ISF, BMVI)

### **5. AOB (19:55 – 20:00)**