



Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar
Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh
Irish Presidency of the Council
of the European Union
eu2013.ie



OIFIG AN AIRE DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Informal Justice and Home Affairs Ministers' Meeting

Dublin 17 - 18 January 2013

Discussion Paper – Session II (Home Affairs)

Greek National Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management

Greece submitted its Action Plan on Asylum Reform and Migration Management to the Commission in August 2010. Owing to the unprecedented numbers of irregular migrants and asylum seekers attempting to cross the EU external border onto Greek territory, the existing capacity and resources were under severe strain. Under the Action Plan Greece proposes to establish a National Immigration Flow Management System involving:

- creating screening centres and adopting a modern procedure for screening, registering and managing aliens.
- restructuring the asylum procedure and creating a new Asylum Department.
- increasing the number of centres for receiving vulnerable groups and minors.
- modernising aliens' detention centres and creating new centres and improving the returns procedure.

These initiatives, which started in October 2009, were intended to be gradually rolled out over a three-year period. In December 2010 the

European Commission announced an emergency funding package for Greece of €9.8 million under the European Refugee Fund. In April 2011, following a request by the Greek authorities, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Greece agreed a two year Operating Plan setting out in detail the conditions for the deployment of Asylum Support Teams (ASTs) in Greece.

Since the beginning of operations in Greece in 2011, EASO has deployed over 40 ASTs to support Greece in building up a new asylum system, in particular by supporting the Greek authorities in setting-up the First Reception Service, the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority and improving reception conditions. Under the Operating Plan EASO activities in Greece will continue at least until 1 April 2013. In addition, EASO in cooperation with UNHCR, is providing additional support aimed at clearing the backlog of pending asylum applications. The expected impact of this measure is a reduction of 20,000 in the backlog of pending appeals cases from almost 45,000 in June 2012 to almost 25,000 by the end of 2012 through the identification of inactive cases and the adoption of “interruption” decisions.

In a report to the JHA Council in October 2012, the Commission noted that the close cooperation to date has brought several positive developments. The strengthening of controls at the land border between Greece and Turkey has resulted in a sharp decrease of irregular migration. An additional 200 posts of public administrators have been committed for the three new services of first reception, asylum and appeals. However, the Commission also reported that a number of deficiencies remain. Notably, (a) reception conditions in the detention centres for migrants, including asylum seekers, in the areas of Evros and the Aegean islands are substandard, (b) access to the asylum procedure is impaired, and (c) open reception capacities remain insufficient.

In October 2012 Commissioner Malmstrom and the Greek Minister Dendias agreed that the Greek Action Plan submitted to the Commission in August 2010 would be revised by the Greek authorities by the end of 2012. It would reflect the current state of affairs and include concrete objectives and

deliverables (benchmarks) in order to ensure fast and significant progress and allow for a concrete picture as regards the degree of implementation. The revised Action Plan would also incorporate Member States' offers of support on the basis of the Greek needs assessment transmitted to Member States on 28 September 2012.

The Greek Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection has informed the Presidency that the revised Action Plan will be distributed on 11 January 2013. The revised Action Plan will be presented by Greece at the informal JHA Council on 17 January 2013.

Ministers will be invited to give initial reactions.