

MEPs assess refugee camps in Greece and call for smoother implementation of EU-Turkey deal

[23-05-2016 - 17:47]

A delegation from the civil liberties committee visited Greece last week to assess refugees' situation at the EU's external borders and the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal to manage the influx of migrants and refugees. The delegation was led by Hungarian S&D member Péter Niedermüller. Members also met with representatives from the Greek authorities, international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

According to Frontext, 1.83 million illegal crossings were detected at the EU's external borders last year. Southern European countries were responsible for dealing with most of these migrants, but the sharp increase has proved challenging. The delegation aimed to see how Greece was coping.

On Tuesday evening delegation members met Greek migration minister Ioannis Mouzalas, who acknowledged that the situation in Idomeni was "not good" and explained that the Greek authorities want to close down the camp by mid June.

On Wednesday members visited Idomeni camp, where nearly 12,000 people - 40% of them underage - live. They were shown the camp by humanitarian staff and talked to some of the people living there.

Part of the delegation visited the closed registration and accommodation centre in Moria, Lesvos, on Thursday. Following the EU-Turkey statement on 18 March, some 3,500 migrants have been kept there while waiting to be registered.

Péter Niedermüller, head of the delegation, said: "In the short term, we need to ensure on the ground health care, social care, psychological support and access to education for children. In the medium term, we need a process based on legal alternatives by which these people can be relocated or granted international protection in Greece. In the long term, we need a genuinely common European asylum system based on solidarity and acceptance of the realities of human migration."

He also asked for an improvement of the information given to migrations: "The failure to provide meaningful information leads to anger and frustration. We also need to move as quickly as possible towards processing formal asylum procedures, in order to offer them a perspective for a better future."

MEPs also met representatives from local authorities and visited the open facility of Kara Tepe, Lesvos. According to UNHCR, 95% of the camp's population is considered vulnerable, including people with disabilities, pregnant women and women travelling with children.

[Find out more about the delegation visit to Greece from our Storify here.](#)

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- Living conditions and prospects for refugees in Greece must be improved, MEPs say: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160518IPR27902/Living-conditions-and-prospects-for-refugees-in-Greece-must-be-improvedMEPs-say>
- MEPs ask for funds for hotspots in Greece and better information for asylum seekers: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160519IPR28227/MEPs-ask-funds-for-hotspots-in-Greece-and-better-information-for-asylum-seekers>
- Migration top story: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/top-stories/20150831TST91035/Migration-a-common-challenge>
- Audiovisual materials: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2826>