



Press Release

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EASO delegation visits Greece to discuss with the new Government the support that EASO is extending on asylum issues and progress made by the Greek authorities on the management of asylum and migration flows.

EASO to give additional support to Greece aimed at reducing the backlog of asylum appeal claims.

On 13 November 2012 an EASO delegation, headed by Dr Robert K. Visser, Executive Director of EASO, visited Greece to discuss the state of play regarding EASO support to Greece and progress made by the Greek authorities in the area of asylum and reception. During the visit, the EASO Executive Director held a meeting with Minister Nikolaos Dendias, Greek Minister for Public Order and Citizen Protection, where EASO continued support to Greece and the additional support aimed at reducing the backlog of asylum appeals claims was discussed. During the meeting Minister Dendias and Dr Visser signed an amendment to the EASO-Greece Operating Plan. This plan supports the new First Reception Service, the Asylum Service, and the Appeals Authority. It also provides support to the backlog clearance procedure currently being undertaken. In Athens, the EASO delegation also met with EU Member States Ambassadors and visited the new asylum and first reception services, as well as a number of sitting Appeals Committees.

Greece has faced particular asylum pressures in the past years due to a significant influx of irregular migrants at the European external borders. Following a request made by the Greek Government, in February 2011, EASO agreed to support Greece and to deploy Asylum Support Teams (ASTs) to Greece.¹ Since the beginning of its operations in Greece in 2011, EASO has deployed over 40 ASTs to support Greece with building up a new asylum system, in particular by supporting the Greek government in setting-up the: First Reception Service; Asylum Service; Appeals Authority; and improving reception conditions. EASO is managing ASTs on the ground in Greece and works closely with the Greek government, UNHCR, FRONTEX and other stakeholders. In the framework of the Operating Plan, EASO and Greek authorities have managed to:

- establish a training plan for staff of the new services, which is being implemented. A number of trainers trained in the European Asylum Curriculum modules, who belong to the new services, are training staff who have joined more recently;

¹ ASTs are multidisciplinary teams of EU experts deployed by EASO in a Member State for a limited time in order to support the asylum system of that Member State.

- plan for the transition of DubliNet and Eurodac database to the new services;
- develop guidelines on age assessment, vulnerable categories and a strategy on the increase of reception and accommodation facilities.

In line with the timeline contained in the Operating Plan, EASO activities in Greece will continue at least until April 1st, 2013.

During his visit, the EASO Executive Director held a meeting with Minister Nikolaos Dendias, Greek Minister for Public Order and Citizen Protection. During the meeting Dr Visser pointed out that EASO is committed to continue supporting Greece in building its new asylum system. In addition to the measures highlighted in the EASO-Greece Operational Plan, EASO, in cooperation with UNHCR will be providing additional support aimed at clearing the backlog of pending asylum applications. To this end, EASO will be issuing a grant to cover such activities until March 2013. During the meeting Minister Dendias and Dr Visser signed an amendment to the EASO-Greece Operating Plan to increase further the European support to Greece via the deployment of ASTs.

In Athens, the EASO delegation also met with EU Member States Ambassadors and visited the: First Reception Centre; Asylum Service; Appeals Authority; and the Appeal Committees. During his visit, Dr Visser noted that significant progress has already been achieved by the Greek authorities, and that it needs to be sustained.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office by contacting Mr Jean-Pierre Schembri on the following e-mail address: jean-pierre.schembri@ext.ec.europa.eu