



Press Release

PR 01/2014

14 January 2014

EASO delegation visits the Greek First Reception Service

On 14 January 2014 an EASO delegation, headed by Dr Robert K. Visser, Executive Director of EASO, visited the Greek First Reception Service (FRS) in Athens. The aim of the visit was to discuss the state of play regarding EASO support to Greece and progress made by the Greek authorities in the area of reception and in particular, reception of vulnerable groups in Greece. During his visit, the EASO Executive Director held a meeting with Mr. Panagiotis Nikas, Director of the First Reception Service, and met with the employees of the First Reception Service.

The Greek First Reception Service task is the management of the third-country nationals who enter the country illegally, by guiding them through the first reception procedures, including: a) the verification of their identity and nationality, b) their registration in a national database, c) their medical control and the provision of any necessary health care and psychosocial support, d) information about their rights and obligations, in particular the conditions under which they can be placed under international protection and e) special care for those belonging to vulnerable groups.

During the meeting, Dr Visser and Mr Panagiotis discussed the support priorities in the field of reception and the implementation of the EASO-Greece Operating Plan Phase II which provides for EASO emergency support in the following areas: **Asylum procedures:** the training of the staff of the backlog committees (which deal with the backlog of asylum cases) and of the Hellenic Police; **Sustainable and efficient asylum and reception procedures:** in particular, the training of staff of the new services and in the field of provision of country of origin information; **Horizontal issues,** such as in the area of management of EU funds, the collection and analysis of statistical data and ad hoc workshops on nationality identification. Furthermore, Dr Visser was briefed about the experiences of the First Reception Services with its mobile units, which is a new instrument in Greece and which provides flexible support, in the field of reception, to the Greek islands.

Dr Visser expressed his satisfaction with the progress registered by the Greek authorities in the area of reception, and welcomed the increased focus on support related to reception and, in particular, to the reception of vulnerable categories. This is in line with the agreement reached between the European Commission and the Greek government, during Commissioner's Malmstrom visit to Greece in December 2013, on expanding the capacity in the field of open accommodation in Greece.

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@easo.europa.eu

Background

EASO support to Greece dates back to April 2011, when the implementation of Operating Plan Phase I started. 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. On 7 March 2013 Dr Robert K. Visser, Executive Director of EASO, and Minister Nikolaos Dendias, Greek Minister for Public Order and Citizen Protection, signed the EASO-Greece Operating Plan Phase II. The Operating Plan Phase II builds on the progress made within the framework of Operating Plan Phase I, and extends EASO support to Greece up until December 2014. It provides for EASO emergency support to Greece in a number of prioritized areas, such as training of the staff of the new services, support to the backlog committees, support to improvement of reception procedures and the management of EU funds related to asylum and reception.

Under Operating Plan Phase II, 56 Asylum Support Teams (ASTs) are scheduled to be deployed by EASO to Greece in order to support Greece with building up a new asylum system, in particular by supporting Greece to enhance and build its capacity in tackling the backlog of asylum cases and supporting the setup of a sustainable and efficient asylum and reception structure: new First Reception Service; Asylum Service; and Appeals Authority; and improving reception conditions. EASO is managing ASTs on the ground in Greece and works closely with the Greek government, FRONTEX, the European Commission, UNHCR and other stakeholders.