



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT
ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY **A**



Economic and Monetary Affairs

Employment and Social Affairs

Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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Internal Market and Consumer Protection

Integration of Refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy

Annex 1: Country Case Study Greece

Study for the EMPL Committee

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT A: ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY

Integration of Refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy

Annex 1: Country Case Study Greece

STUDY

Abstract

This country case study is part of the Study on the Integration of Refugees in Italy, Hungary and Italy. It provides an overview of recent policy developments in the reception and integration of refugees in Greece.

The focus of the analysis is on progress achieved in the last three years in the adaptation of the reception and integration system for the high numbers of new arrivals and the main challenges encountered, with focus on labour market integration measures.

Special attention is also given to the changes in perceptions in public opinion with respect to the asylum and integration of refugees and how the political and public discourse influenced policy strategies.

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	4
LIST OF TABLES	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1. THE DIMENSIONS AND MAIN FEATURES OF THE INFLOW OF REFUGEES AND OTHER MIGRANTS	6
1.1 Evolution of the inflows of refugees and other migrants in the country since 2010	6
1.2 Overview of the level of integration of refugees in the country	8
2. EVOLUTION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK	10
2.1 Evolution of the legal and policy approach	10
2.2 Management and governance of reception and integration measures	16
2.3 Examples of concrete measures implemented in the country	16
3. THE ROLE OF EU SUPPORT	17
4. EVOLUTION OF THE DEBATE IN THE COUNTRY	18
5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	19
5.1 Conclusions	19
5.2 Policy recommendations	20
MAIN REFERENCES	21
ANNEXES	22
ANNEX I – LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED AND STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED	22
ANNEX II– (GOOD) PRACTICE FICHE	23

MAIN STUDY:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/614194/IPOL_STU\(2017\)614194_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/614194/IPOL_STU(2017)614194_EN.pdf)

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Evolution of applications between 2014 and 2017	7
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Composition of asylum seekers population	7
Table 2	Outcome of applications received	8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been reported that 30 refugees and migrants have drowned while crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece. A total of 9,286 managed to cross the sea; 37 % of them, the largest group, were Syrians. While the number of crossings between January and April this year was vastly lower (by 97 %) than during the same period in 2016, the number of arrivals in May and June this year was 26 % higher than in the same two-month period last year. Although Greece remains a transit country for refugees and other migrants, according to the most recent EUROSTAT data, the number of asylum seekers per million of inhabitants places Greece proportionately in second position as a receiving country.

Concerning first rescue and reception measures, five ‘hotspots’ were established at the sea border. After the EU–Turkey Agreement on 18 March 2016, they have developed into detention centres. The conditions of the hotspots remain below an acceptable standard. Overcrowding is serious, general living conditions can be described as inhumane and provision for winter care is inadequate.

Different camp-type sites have been established for the reception of asylum seekers, migrants and recognised refugees with the support of international organisations and NGOs.

The very low absorption of EU funds, the lack of coordination at central and regional level, and monitoring keep the quality of reception conditions low and problematic. Although the access to labour and health seems open to asylum seekers and refugees, various obstacles make it often impossible in practice. There is no ‘affirmative action’ policy for recognised refugees whose family reunification remains impossible due to the non-publication of a decree. The lack of the institution of guardianship, the measure of detention of children in protective custody at detention centres, many of them without yarding, remain the biggest and most urgent challenges to the Greek state. The difficulties of identification, special care and reception is the other challenge the Greek authorities should address. The issues of coordination and absorption of EU funds and the flexibility and monitoring of the responsible authorities is a crucial point. The other issue is the dialogue and cooperation with civil society and the Greek Ombudsman.

Concerning the obligations of the Greek state, it is obvious that the access to the Greek territory, to the asylum procedure and to the proper reception conditions are not measures of integration but a prerequisite for integration. On the other hand, the EU–Turkey Joint Statement of 18 March 2017 as an extra-institutional activity according to the General Court of the EU of 18 February 2016 should be abolished. This is considered to be shaking the foundations of the EU structure itself and putting the lives of refugees and migrants in danger.

1. THE DIMENSIONS AND MAIN FEATURES OF THE INFLOW OF REFUGEES AND OTHER MIGRANTS

1.1 Evolution of the inflows of refugees and other migrants in the country since 2010

In the first six months of 2017, **9 286 refugees and migrants crossed the sea from Turkey to Greece** with many in need of international protection. While the number of crossings between January and April this year was vastly lower (97 %) than during the same period in 2016, the number of arrivals in May and June this year was 26 % higher than in the same two-month period last year. Most arrivals in the first six months of 2017 have been to Chios (33 %), followed by Lesbos (29 %), Samos (18 %), and the South Dodecanese islands (16 %).

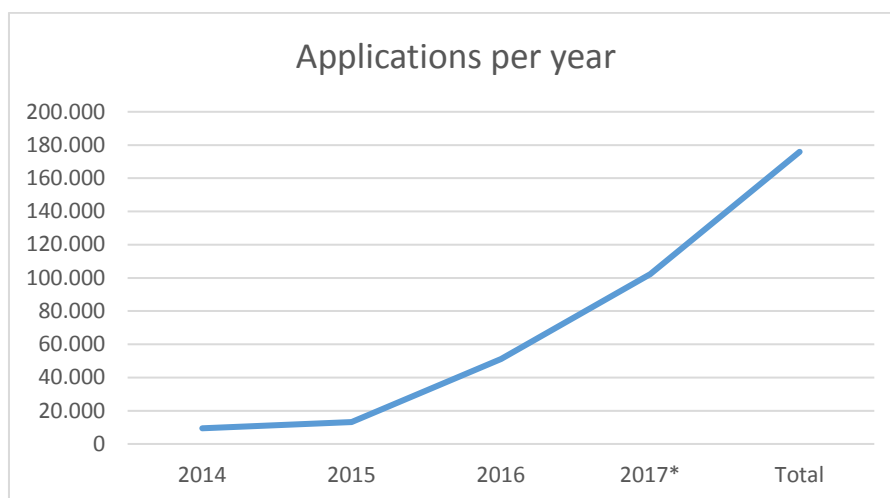
Since the start of the year, 30 refugees and migrants have been reported to have drowned while crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece with most deaths occurring in two incidents. No further deaths were reported in May and June¹.

Among arrivals during the first six months of 2017, Syrian nationals continued to be the largest group comprising 37 %, followed by those from Iraqi (13 %), the Democratic Republic of Congo (7 %), Afghanistan (6 %) and Algeria (6 %).

As of the end of June, 46 % of arrivals by sea were male, with 22 % women and 32 % children. Many Syrians and Iraqis continue to arrive in family groups and 40 % of Syrian arrivals since the start of the year have been children, along with 35 % men and 25 % women. Based on individual interviews conducted by UNHCR and partners, it appears that a number of women, particularly from Africa, crossing to Greece by sea are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, either in their country of origin or during their journey, and there are concerns that some may be victims of trafficking.

Correspondingly, Greece received 175 904 applications (+1765 % compared to 2014).

¹ UNHCR, Desperate Journeys: Refugees and migrants entering and crossing Europe via the Mediterranean and Western Balkans, January–June 2017 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58838>

Figure 1 Evolution of applications between 2014 and 2017

By 31 May 2017, **102 184** claims for international protection had been registered by the Asylum Service (+**587.8 %** increase since the beginning of the Asylum Service's operation).

Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are the main countries of origin of asylum seekers in 2017. According to the most recent EUROSTAT data, the number of asylum seekers per million of inhabitants places Greece proportionately in second position as a receiving country.

Table 1 Composition of asylum seekers population

Population	Total
Men	69 201
Women	32 983
Minors	32 272

Most of the asylum seekers (49.2 %) are people aged between 18 and 34 years old and only a minority (0.5 %) are over 65 years old.

Concerning the asylum **claims registered exclusively on the islands** from 20 March 2016 to 11 June 2017, in the context of the EU–Turkey Common Statement, they have reached a total of **19 970**. Most of these claims (46 %) were referred to the regular procedure².

² <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/30-06-2017/italygreece-update-implementation-hotspots>

Table 2 Outcome of applications received³

Result	Number of applications	% of the overall applications
Positive	881	5 %
Referred to regular procedure	8 409	46 %
Referred to Dublin procedure	2 687	15 %
Deemed inadmissible or unfounded	4 471	25 %
Discontinued	1 686	9 %
Total	18 134	

As far as the **relocation** procedure is concerned, by 12 June 2017, **14 709** asylum seekers had departed for other EU Member States. In the same reference period, **23 189** applications for relocation had been sent by the Greek authorities to other European states, while the relocation of approximately **8 500 asylum** seekers is still pending.

Finally, concerning the application of the Dublin Regulation, throughout its operation, the Asylum Service has **sent to other Member States 12 924 requests mostly for family reunification** (including requests for the review of negative decisions) and 56 % of them have already been accepted⁴.

In six years the extremely low recognition rate of 2010 (1.73 % of the overall applications), when the Greek Police service was responsible for the procedure, rose to 26.5 % in 2016 (for the cases under the responsibility of the Asylum Service)⁵.

According to the Central Operational Body of Migration (ΚΕΠΟΜ), the number of 'guests' living in deprivation of their liberty in the hotspots on 7 August was considerably greater than the capacity of the hotspots (see annex).

1.2 Overview of the level of integration of refugees in the country

The National Strategy on the Integration of Third Country Nationals has only been partially implemented so far, mainly due to budgetary constraints and delays in the implementation of AMIF-related actions. However, deliverables under actions prioritised and completed (or still ongoing) under the European Integration Fund (2007–2013) should be utilised to link with and inform the design of further interventions. As indicative examples, Action 1.1/11 (One-stop shops for migrants and the National Registry of Certified Cultural Mediators) and 1.3/11 (Greek language courses for adults) could be used to ensure harmonisation with similar activities to be designed and implemented in 2017 and beyond.

Those granted status need to transit from support and assistance schemes designed to benefit asylum seekers⁶ if they had such support, to national schemes under which they are eligible to benefit under the same terms and conditions as Greek nationals. Transition to national schemes is not in itself integration neither does it warrant that integration will be

³ <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/30-06-2017/italygreece-update-implementation-hotspots>

⁴ Asylum Service, Press Release: Four years since the Asylum Service became operational <http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?p=2569>

⁵ For further details see annexes and statistics of AIDA/ECRE

⁶ e.g. the CBI programme, the accommodation scheme, reception facilities and temporary accommodation sites directly managed by the Greek authorities

achieved. However, it is a prerequisite for refugees and subsidiary protection holders to start the integration process.

There are two types of national schemes linked to this transition:

- (i) **National schemes** offering safety-net coverage of basic needs to the population groups eligible for such coverage (refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are included). **The Social Solidarity Income** (which inter alia offers a monthly cash allowance to persons falling under the poverty threshold) is one example
- (ii) **Affirmative action** national schemes aimed at providing support to beneficiaries of international protection to effectively access their rights (e.g. **vocational training and professional orientation schemes, validation of professional /academic qualifications of refugees**)

While Greece has in place a number of **national schemes which can ensure safety-net coverage of some asylum seekers' and refugees' needs** (e.g. a monthly cash allowance through the Social Solidarity Income, free medical and hospital care), other **basic needs (e.g. housing) remain largely unaddressed**. In the absence of a national scheme for social housing tailored to the needs of the refugee population, the only alternatives for persons receiving confirmation of status seem to be either the facilities offering temporary shelter to the homeless or ad hoc solutions (e.g. reconfiguring the current accommodation scheme or re-opening temporary accommodation such as 'camp-like' sites). As of 22 August, a total of 1 214 persons on the UNHCR managed accommodation scheme had received confirmation of status and had to initiate the transition to some sort of alternative housing solution after the expiry of an extension period (currently for a maximum of six months). Several hundred more were estimated to be in other (e.g. camp-like) accommodation sites established by the Greek authorities.

The German Federal Court presided over a case of a recognised refugee in Greece whose transfer from Germany to Greece was frozen. The decision (published 8 May 2017), arose as a result of evidence accepted by the Court that Greece did not sufficiently assist recognised refugees, especially in relation to effective access to 'shelter, food and sanitary facilities'. This is bound to create more interest in the issue of refugee integration in Greece by donors, EU institutions, as well as EU Member States (see interviews in Annex).

3. EVOLUTION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Evolution of the legal and policy approach

Access to territory – access to protection

A number of push-backs to Turkey in the Evros area has been reported in 2017. Furthermore, cases have also been reported of third-country nationals who had formally expressed before the Greek authorities the intention to seek asylum; however, they were readmitted to Turkey without their application being properly registered and examined. This has been occurring on the islands since the entry into force of the EU–Turkey statement⁷.

The adoption of ‘hotspot’ EU policy approach

During 2015, five hotspots were established in Greece. EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust worked together with the Greek authorities for the identification, registration and fingerprinting of the incoming migrants to process the asylum claims and arrange returns. The hotspots also contribute to the implementation of the relocation scheme proposed by EU Commission in 2015.

The hotspots after the EU–Turkey Agreement

After the EU–Turkey Agreement on 18 March 2016, the hotspot facilities have turned into detention centres. All people arriving after 20 March 2016 are:

- returned to Turkey if they do not seek international protection or their applications are rejected, either as inadmissible under the ‘safe third country’ or ‘first country of asylum’ concepts or on the merits of their case;
- required to remain at the islands until they have their applications examined;
- allowed to move to the mainland if their asylum application is considered to be admissible, either due to exemption from the statement (see fast-track border procedure) or because the safe third country or first country of asylum concepts may not be applied in their case.

Unlike Italy, no additional hotspots have been added to the existing group that included Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. In Greece, the arrivals remained low. By April 2017 the number of people reaching Greek territory through the Aegean islands numbered 4 900.

There is much concern relating to proper assessment of vulnerabilities within the scope of the Reception and Identification Service’s (RIS) procedures. In several islands, the Reception and Identification Services procedures could be completed without the registered person having been assessed for potential vulnerabilities. This situation has become even more complicated due to problems regarding the continuation of the collaboration between RIS and the NGOs providing medical and psychosocial services within their scope.

Unlike in the past, applicants of all nationalities have access to the asylum procedure and thus they have their applications registered and examined. However, the procedure under which applications are examined differs depending on the nationality of the applicants. Since January 2017, the Asylum Service has notably increased its capacity to register and examine asylum applications. The registration and examination within a very short time period –

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/08/world/europe/turkey-greece-asylum-pushbacks.html?mcubz=3>

especially if conducted before the vulnerability assessment is completed – is raising various concerns.

EASO's role in decision-making procedures has been further increased, as the agency is also involved in the second instance asylum procedure.

Even more concerning, detention as an administrative measure has been applied even more extensively. According to the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU–Turkey Statement, the detention capacity on the islands is to be increased. To this end, in February 2017, a pre-removal detention facility was established on the island of Kos.

Finally, the living conditions of the hotspots remain below an acceptable standard. Overcrowding is serious, general living conditions can be described as inhumane and provision for winter care is inadequate⁸. The situation frequently becomes critical⁹.

The asylum procedure and relocation

The time limit set in law for the determining authority to make a decision on the asylum application at first instance is six months. Obstacles to accessing the asylum procedure on the mainland due to the need for applicants to have a Skype appointment prior to appearing before the Asylum Service, the closure of the Western Balkan route and containment of about 50 000 persons in Greece led to significant pressure on the Asylum Service, exceeding its capacity and ability to register new asylum claims. In practice, fast-track border procedure applies to arrivals after 20 March 2016 and takes place in the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. Under the fast-track border procedure, which does not apply to Dublin family cases and vulnerable cases, interviews are also conducted by EASO staff, while the entire procedure at first and second instance has to be completed within 14 days. The procedure has predominantly taken the form of an admissibility procedure to examine whether applications may be dismissed on the grounds that Turkey is a safe third country or a first country of asylum¹⁰. Although these concepts already existed in the Greek law, they have only been applied following the EU–Turkey statement.

Free legal aid is provided at second instance but it is very limited. Legal aid can be provided for a small number of beneficiaries by NGOs.

Reception and Identification provisions

The Reception and Identification Service (RIS) was established by Law 4375/2016 after the EU–Turkey Agreement. According to Article 8(2) L 4375/2016, the RIS is responsible for:

- registration, identification and data verification procedures, medical screening, identification of vulnerable persons, the provision of information, especially for international or another form of protection and return procedures, as well as the temporary stay of third-country nationals or stateless persons entering the country without complying with the legal formalities and their further referral to the appropriate reception or temporary accommodation structures;
- the establishment, operation and supervision of centres (Κέντρα) and structures (Δομές) for the purposes of those procedures;

⁸ <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/30-06-2017/italygreece-update-implementation-hotspots>

⁹ http://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/msf_lesbos_vulnerability_report1.pdf

¹⁰ See above

- the establishment, operation and supervision of Open Temporary Reception (Δομές Προσωρινής Υποδοχής) facilities for third-country nationals or stateless persons who have requested international protection;
- the establishment, operation and supervision of open temporary accommodation structures (Δομές Προσωρινής Φιλοξενίας) for third-country nationals or stateless persons who are under a return, removal or readmission procedure or whose removal has been postponed.

The non-fully transposition of the recast Reception Directive

The Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU, recast 29.6.13 have not yet been transposed into national law, with the exception of the detention provisions, which have been partially transposed by L 4375/2016.

Material reception conditions for asylum seekers

Material reception conditions provided in PD 220/2007 include accommodation in reception centres and a financial allowance. Asylum seekers may not stay in reception centres for more than one year, after which they are assisted in finding accommodation by NGOs being in cooperation with the State Organisation E.K.K.A (National Centre for Social Solidarity). In practice, the reception conditions remain extremely poor, and are available only for a limited number of beneficiaries.

Types of accommodation for asylum seekers

Law 4375/2016 after the EU–Turkey Agreement has provided a legal basis for the establishment of different accommodation facilities. In addition to Reception and Identification Centres, the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Migration Policy may, by joint decision, establish open Temporary Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers (Δομές Προσωρινής Υποδοχής Αιτούντων Διεθνή Προστασία), as well as open temporary accommodation facilities (Δομές Προσωρινής Φιλοξενίας) for persons subject to return procedures or whose return has been suspended. Notwithstanding these provisions, most temporary accommodation centres and emergency facilities operate without a prior Ministerial Decision and the requisite legal basis. The living conditions in these facilities are significantly below minimum standards¹¹.

Separated children

According to Law 4375/2016 which was launched after the EU–Turkey Agreement separated children have the same rights of reception as asylum seekers. But what must be stressed is the absence of a guardian, the lack of reliable system for age verification, their detention as a ‘protective custody measure’ and their unsafe accommodation within the Open Temporary Accommodation Facilities for Refugees and Migrants (see the relevant tables/figures in the annex)¹².

¹¹ <http://www.msf.org/en/article/greece-2016-vulnerable-people-left-behind>

¹² <http://www.ekka.org.gr/files/aglika15817.pdf>

Access to labour market for asylum seekers and refugees

According to the national legislation, as amended in 2016, asylum seekers have access to the labour market as employees, or service or work providers, from the moment an asylum application has been formally lodged and they have obtained an asylum seeker's card. There must be also access to labour, where the completion of the application for lodging procedure is delayed for reasons which are not the applicants' fault. Law 4375/2016, Articles 69 and 71, provide for complete and automatic access to the labour market for refugees. However, in practice, unemployment rates are so high, and competition from workers who speak Greek is so intense, that it is extremely difficult for newly recognised refugees that do not speak the language to find employment. Additionally, refugees face obstacles in enrolling in vocational training programmes as the majority of them cannot provide evidence (high school degrees, diplomas etc.) of their educational background, which is a prerequisite for participating.

Access to education

Children of citizens of a third country can enrol at public schools with incomplete documentation if they:

- (a) are granted refugee status by the Greek state;
- (b) come from regions where the situation is turbulent;
- (c) have filed an asylum claim;
- (d) are third-country nationals residing in Greece, even if their legal residence has not been settled yet.

Registration may not take longer than three months, or one year where special language training is provided to facilitate access to the education system. The Ministerial Decision issued in August 2016 provided the establishment of preparatory classes for all school-age children aged 4 to 15 years. This programme is implemented in public schools neighbouring camps or places of residence. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education, children aged between 6 and 15 years, living in open temporary facilities, will be enrolled in afternoon preparatory classes from 14.00 to 18.00 in neighbouring public schools identified by the Ministry. They will be taught Greek as a second language, English language, mathematics, sports, arts and computer science. Their transport is organised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The aim of this educational program ('Reception/Preparatory Classes for the Education of Refugees') is to facilitate the integration of refugee and migrant children into the educational process in a way that should gradually allow them to join mainstream classes in Greek schools. These classes are part of the mandatory formal educational system which are run by "substitute teachers" of public schools. They are geared to refugee and migrant children who live in the official refugee camps. It is estimated that under the school year 2016/17 2 643 children joined 145 afternoon classes in 111 public schools.

Children aged between 6 and 15 years, living in dispersed urban settings (such as relocation accommodation, squats, apartments, hotels, and reception centres for asylum seekers and unaccompanied children), may go to schools near their place of residence, to enrol in the morning classes "Reception Classes" alongside Greek children, in schools that will be identified by the Ministry. Such "Classes" have been in operation in certain public school units since 2010. This is done with the aim of ensuring a balanced distribution of children across selected schools, as well as across preparatory classes for migrant and refugee children where Greek is taught as a second language. According to the Ministry of Education,

approximately 2 000 refugee and migrant children attended such morning “Reception Classes” in the school year 2016/17. Furthermore non –formal educational activities have also been taken place in the official refugee sites. These are mainly funded by the UNHCR and implemented by NGOs¹³.

Health

According to national legislation, asylum seekers are entitled to necessary health, pharmaceutical and hospital care free of charge, on condition that they have no health insurance and no financial means. Such health care includes:

- (a) clinical and medical examinations in public hospitals, health centres or regional medical centres;
- (b) medication provided on prescription by a medical doctor serving in one of the institutions mentioned in point (a) and acknowledged by their director;
- (c) hospital assistance in public hospitals, hospitalisation at a class C room.

In all cases, emergency aid shall be provided to applicants free of charge. Applicants who have special needs shall receive special medical assistance.

A new law adopted in 2016 provides free access to public health services for persons without social insurance and who are vulnerable. Among others, asylum seekers and members of their families are considered as persons belonging to vulnerable groups and entitled to have free access to the public health system and pharmaceutical treatment. However, there are no translators or cultural mediators in public hospitals, which means that the access is becoming from hard to impossible for patients who do not speak English or Greek. Additionally, administrative barriers have been observed in some cases with regard to access to the healthcare system, which mainly concern difficulties in the issue of a Social Security Number (Αριθμός Μητρώου Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης, AMKA) or the fact that staff in hospitals or healthcare centres are not always aware of the 2016 law¹⁴.

Naturalisation

The waiting period for obtaining citizenship for refugees is three years and for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection seven years. A fee of €100 is required for the submission of the application for **refugees**. In the case of beneficiaries of **subsidiary protection**, the fee is €700. A €200 fee is required for the re-examination of the case. Although a recognised refugee can apply for the acquisition of citizenship three years after recognition, especially in case of adult refugees residing in Greece, they must undergo a lengthy, complex and demanding exam procedure, that involves deep knowledge of the Greek history, culture, politics and literature etc.

¹³ Ministry of Education, *Q&A for access to education for refugee children*, 1 February 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2malzAv>, AIDA, Greece, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/28-03-2017/aida-2016-update-greece>
[ESPN Flash Report 2017/67 - Greece - Integrating refugee and migrant children into the educational system in Greece](http://www.espn.com/flash-report/2017/67-greece-integrating-refugee-and-migrant-children-into-the-educational-system-in-greece)

¹⁴ *Solidarity Now*, ‘Issues in the issuance of AMKA’, 10 November 2016, available in Greek at: <http://bit.ly/2ltg9Ql>; MSF, *Greece in 2016: Vulnerable People Left Behind*, 20 October 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kPFBG1>, AIDA, Greece, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/28-03-2017/aida-2016-update-greece>

Family reunification for refugees

According to the transposition of the Family Reunification Directive in PD 131/2006, as supplemented by PD 167/2008 and amended by PD 113/2013, only recognised **refugees** have the right to apply for reunification with family members who are third-country nationals, if they are in their home country or in another country outside the EU. According to Article 13 PD 131/2006, 'family members' include: (a) spouses; (b) unmarried minor children; (c) unmarried adult children with serious health problems which render them incapable of supporting themselves; (d) parents, where the beneficiary solemnly declares that he or she has been living with them and taking care of them before leaving his or her country of origin, and that they no longer have other family members to care for and support them; (e) unmarried partners with whom the applicant has a stable relationship, which is proven mainly by the existence of a child or previous cohabitation, or any other appropriate means of proof.

If the refugee is an unaccompanied minor, he or she has the right to be reunited with his or her parents if he or she does not have any other adult relatives in Greece.

According to Article 23 of PD 141/2013 and Article 21 of Law 4375/2016, family members of the beneficiary of international protection who do not individually qualify for such protection are entitled to a renewable residence permit which must be valid for as long as the beneficiary's. However, if the family was created after entering the country, in case of spouses both of them must have a valid residence permit at the time that the wedding ceremony took place. These provisions are in direct violation of Article 8 ECHR and extremely impractical since, in order to qualify for a residence permit as a refugee family member, they must already have a residence permit.

Recently a new serious obstacle has arisen. According to Article 14.5 Law 4332/2015 'a joint decision of the Ministers of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction and of Foreign Affairs defines the necessary supporting documents, the procedure for issuance of national entry visas and any other relevant detail in regard to family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree 131/2006, as in force.' Until now, no joint decision has been published. Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has denied any family reunification.

Allowances

Family allowances are provided to families, who can show a 10-year permanent and continuous stay in Greece. As a result, the majority of refugees and beneficiaries of international protection are excluded from this benefit. Allowances to single mothers are provided to those who can provide proof (divorce, death certificate, birth certificates etc.) of their family situation. With no access to any authority of their country and no provision in law or in practice from the Greek state, many of them are excluded because they cannot provide the necessary documents.

There are no special and fixed allowances for refugees and beneficiaries of international protection.

Social support

There is no provision of social support for vulnerable refugee cases, such as victims of torture, by the state. The only psychosocial and legal support addressed on the identification and rehabilitation of torture victims in Greece is offered by three NGOs – Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Day Centre Babel and Doctors without Borders, which means that the continuity of the programme depends on funding. There are no free courses for Greek language by the State for adults. The only programme organised by the University of Athens charges a fee for participation in Greek language courses, ranging from €500 to €670 per academic year for immigrants and refugees. Free Greek language courses are offered at the

moment only by NGOs. In principle, Law 4387/2016 Article 93 provides for pension rights for uninsured seniors, but the requirement of 15 years of residence in Greece in practice excludes seniors who are newly recognised refugees.

3.2 Management and governance of reception and integration measures

According to Law 4375/2016, competent for the establishment, operation and supervision of open Temporary Reception and temporary accommodation facilities are the Reception and Identification Service (Article 8(2)(b) and (d)) and the Accommodation Department of the Reception Directorate (Article 27(2)) that are under the General Secretariat for Reception of the Ministry of Migration Policy (Article 26). The Reception Directorate is also responsible, inter alia, for:

- coordination of the reception actions across the country;
- study, drafting and monitoring of the implementation of the policy for meeting the accommodation needs of international protection applicants and unaccompanied minors;
- cooperation with co-competent ministries, the Directorate General of Home Affairs of the European Commission, the UNHCR, civil society organisations and other competent agencies in each case, for the planning and implementation of the above policy;
- study, development and processing of the institution framework of specifications related to the establishment and operation of the reception centres and accommodation facilities for applications for international protection and unaccompanied minors;
- care for the communication and cooperation with the involved public agencies and services of the State, with independent authorities, international organisations, NGOs, other organisations of civil society and legal entities, with the purpose of managing the humanitarian aid (Article 27(2)).

In practice, the management and coordination of the actions for the transport, accommodation, food and health care of the refugees and migrants is carried out by the Central Coordinating Body for the Management of the Refugee Crisis that reports directly to the Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, in cooperation with the Asylum Service and the Reception and Identification Service. At the same time there are facilities, where responsibilities for the management of specific issues are simultaneously held by the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Ministry of Defence, the local municipality and humanitarian organisations. This fact creates an overlap of competences and removes the possibility of comprehensive supervision and effective coordination by the main agency that has been appointed for this purpose¹⁵.

3.3 Examples of concrete measures implemented in the country

Two of the most relevant positive measures are:

- access to education for all children, whatever status their parents have, even children whose parents are *sans papiers*;
- the recognition of refugees as vulnerable persons and persons without social insurance that grants them access to free healthcare, as recognised by the 2016 law. However, asylum seekers were beneficiaries of access to health even before this law (see above).

¹⁵ Ombudsman, Migration flows and refugee protection: Administrative challenges and human rights issues, April 2017

4. THE ROLE OF EU SUPPORT

Although the Greek government has received substantial amounts of money for the management of refugees and migrants, Greece could not absorb the biggest part of funding. The best example was that only EUR 1.9 million was absorbed from the EU–AMIF funding of EUR 86.5 million. This is in direct contrast to the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which absorbed the greatest part of the funding.

The National Strategy on the Integration of Third Country Nationals has only partially been implemented so far, mainly due to budgetary constraints and delays in the implementation of AMIF- (national envelope) related actions. Part of this money is given as an emergency funding to international organisations such as UNHCR and NGOs. However, deliverables under actions prioritised and completed (or still ongoing) under the European Integration Fund (2007–2013) should be utilised to link with and inform the design of further interventions. Action 1.1/11 (One-stop shops for migrants and National Registry of Certified Cultural Mediators) and 1.3/11 (Greek language courses for adults) could be used to ensure harmonisation with similar activities to be designed and implemented in 2017 and beyond. A good practice is the operation of “Reception/Preparatory Classes for the Education of Refugees” (DYEP). The financial resources were secured mainly from AMIF the funding of which amounts to 7 million euros for the period 2016-2018 (75 % EU contribution and 25 % national contribution). The IOM also secured funding 2 8 million euro from the DG ECHO for the transportation of children between the accommodation sites and schools.

During the press conference that took place on 7 July on the launch of the flagship Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation (ESTIA) programme, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Christos Stylianides said the aim of these new projects is to get refugees out of the camps and into everyday accommodation and help them have more secure and normal lives. ‘Eventually the programme will benefit 30 000 people by the end of the year’, he added. ‘This will enable (Greece) to shut down more camps,’ he noted while referring to the fact that the state will henceforth replace NGOs in the islands’ camps. He further expressed his belief that the programme could be extended up to 2019¹⁶.

¹⁶ UNHCR Greece Press Review, 28 July 2017

5. EVOLUTION OF THE DEBATE IN THE COUNTRY

Articles on refugees and migrants are published on an everyday basis.

After the EU–Turkey Statement on 18 March 2016 the general EU–Turkey welcoming attitude began to change. Terms such as ‘migration’ and ‘migrants’ instead of ‘refugees’ reappeared in the terminology used by political leaders and other influential actors, with dual negative effect: on the one hand, it was suggested that all the people entering the EU were migrants and hence the EU Member States do not bear the same legal obligations as for refugees. In any case, references to persons of foreign origin increasingly monopolised discussions, with negative content. Along with the signs of changing attitudes, an important part of Greek society continues to stand by refugees and other vulnerable people. People receive the message that the refugee issue is a huge problem with only negative consequences.

The public discourse on providing temporary accommodation facilities for refugees in Greece has triggered many reactions. At the same time tensions in 2016 were on the rise on islands where thousands of persons started to realise gradually that they were about to be ‘trapped’ while local communities started to note the gaps in the management of the situation and the impact on daily life and tourism.

Among the recordings, incidents with similar characteristics of previous years are included as well as trends that have emerged in the context created by the concentration of refugees and migrants on the islands – first entry points, and the consequential pressure on local communities. In the first group of incidents, we must distinguish those that substantiated the non-elimination of organised violence against refugees and migrants. In the second group, the following trends must be mentioned: attacks by groups against small groups of refugees on the islands aiming at intimidating them, the ill-treatment of unaccompanied minors in places of detention, sporadic attacks against a Syrian family or Syrian minors by staff members of KTEL (intercity buses), as well as attacks against humanitarian staff and accommodation sites¹⁷.

¹⁷ http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Report_2016eng.pdf - Racist Violence Recording Network 2016 Annual Report

6. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

The problematic fund absorption: the merger of ministries, with the creation of a “super-ministry” of Interior in January 2015 was followed by the creation of an independent service as a single managing body in the Ministry of Interior in July 2015 headed by a Special Secretary. The consequent regulatory acts authorised by this law were then issued, followed by the procedures for the staffing and certification of the managing authority. Law 4375/2016 (Articles 75, 76 et seq.) established in the Ministry of Finance a Special Secretariat for the Coordination and Management of Programmes. The independent service (now the “Special Service for Coordination and Management [...]”) was transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Finance, as the authority responsible for the national programmes and was included under the newly established Special Secretariat. Various regulatory acts and the amendment of the legislation followed three months later, in July 2016, with which part of the competences of the responsible authority with relation to the preparation and submission of the payment requests, was transferred to the Special Service responsible for the NSRF.⁸¹ A typical example of the consequences of these regulations and changes are the Pre-removal Centers (Detention Centers) for third-country nationals. A catalytic role in the bad living conditions and the lack of essential services in the Detention Centers was held by the lack of stable funding, both for the Detention Centers and also the return operations of individuals in detention. Detention was an area where the lack of funding was due to the administrative inadequacy and tardiness we described above, which resulted in the failure to use the relevant amounts of the regular programme and in having a funding gap since 1.7.2015, extending throughout 2016. The gap was covered with successive temporary allocations from the state budget. By the end of 2016, the designated managing authority of the Ministry of Interior - Department of Citizen Protection issued the amending decision dated 17.10.2016²³⁸ for the funding from the AMIF of the action for the facilities and the functionality of the Detention Centers.¹⁸

The lack of coordination at a central and regional level

There is lack of planning – even in the short term, because there is no institutional framework to describe the methods of cooperation. There is no ruling on who takes decisions. On the one hand, there is a diffusion and lack of competences between the services of the Ministry of Migration Policy and on the other hand between the Ministry and the other involved public agencies, services, international organisations, NGOs etc. Although there are many regulations there is an absence of institutional arrangements and distribution of competencies.

The lack of monitoring

There is lack of monitoring and controlling the conditions of the reception of asylum seekers mechanism by an institution according to the Directive.

¹⁸ Ombudsman, Migration flows and refugee protection. Administrative challenges and human rights, April 2017, p.81 https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/greek_ombudsman_migrants_refugees_2017_en.pdf

The lack of dialogue between the Greek authorities and civil society

There are NGOs with a long tradition of support as well as know-how on several issues concerning the rights of refugees. The Greek authorities on the other side are usually not in dialogue with them.

6.2 Policy recommendations

The lack of coordination and the diffusion of responsibilities must be resolved.

There must be absorption of the available funds (outside the state budget).

There must be a general plan for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

There must be transparency and accountability for the management of the entry and stay of refugees/migrants.

There must be a monitoring mechanism of the reception of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection by an independent institution such as the Greek Ombudsman.

There must be an immediate end to the detention of children as protective custody and the establishment of the institution of guardianship.

All obstacles placed by the law/practices/circulars etc. for recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection which are against the word or the interpretation of 1951 Geneva Convention should be abolished.

There must be dialogue between the NGOs working in the field and the Greek authorities.

The EU–Turkey Joint Statement of 18 March 2017 as an extra-institutional activity according to the General Court of the EU of 18 February 2016 should be abolished as it is shaking the foundations of the EU structure itself.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX I – LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED AND STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Interview by Vangelis Papageorgiou, social worker GCR (Greek Council for Refugees, NGO)

Interview by Eleni Kagiou, lawyer, GCR (Greek Council for Refugees, NGO)

Interview by Mastakas Petros, Associate Protection officer – UNHCR Greece

Interview by Mina Zografaki, Cabinet to the Special Secretary for the Coordination and Management of the National Programmes of AMIF/ISF

ANNEX II – (GOOD) PRACTICE FICHE

Name/title of the practice Period of implementation <i>[Specify when the project/strategy/experience started, if it is still ongoing or finished and if concluded, indicate when]:</i> Body responsible for implementation	Strengthening the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in Greece Home/2014/PAVT/6542 1 March 2015 – 30 November 2017. A project conducted by the Greek Council for Refugees (NGO) and Babel-Syneirmos with the support of project partners and MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres)
Type of instrument/intervention <i>[e.g. specify if the initiative concerns the reception or integration of migrants/asylum seekers; the policy field of intervention: employment support; education/training; health care; accommodation; transportation, other...]</i>	Provision of services in a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. Health care/psychological/psychiatric support/legal/social support to victims of torture (VoT), integration at every level.
Territorial coverage (national, regional, local)	Athens, Greece
Financial allocations <i>([If possible specify the overall financial assignment and the source of funding (European, national, regional, local). If EU funds involved specify which funds])</i>	Home/2014/PAVT/6542
Main goals and reasons for introduction <i>[Specify the objects of the project/strategy/experience and the results it is supposed to achieve]</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) to increase the specialisation of the rehabilitation of VoT in a rehabilitation unit; 2) to enhance the capacity in Greece to provide cross-disciplinary and integrated services to VoT; 3) to enhance the understanding and awareness of the special needs and the services provided for VoT.
Main target groups	Victims of torture, asylums seekers and refugees
Main partners/stakeholders involved (promoter and partners of the project/policy; typology and roles of actors involved) Main implementation and coordination procedures and mechanisms adopted	Greek Council for Refugees/Babel-Syneirmos with the support of project partners (Redress for training) and legal documentation of torture and legal advocacy on behalf of torture victims, CTAR training to improve participants' understanding of VoT. HRFT training by clinical psychiatrists and physicians on provision of rehabilitation services. Internal communication of the unit, an organised referral system by the Greek authorities and NGOs, external communication with civil society, the public sector for seminars.

Main actions/ measures implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supportive, holistic and multidisciplinary approach to 386 persons surpassing the original target of 260 persons for rehabilitation and integration; - psycho-socio-legal support/training to professionals in the public sector and NGOs; - raising awareness through the production of a documentary film. http://thosewhosurvived.smallplanet.gr/
<p>Main results/achievements to date and expected longer term expected impacts according to available monitoring/evaluations</p> <p><i>[Both quantitative and qualitative – specify results and outputs]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multidisciplinary and holistic approach for the provision of services to VoT for their rehabilitation and integration; - strengthened expertise of staff with pertinent specialities in rehabilitation as well as identification; - internal coordination and sense of teamwork; - network of key stakeholders on both a national and a European level considerably strengthened; - communications activities which served to raise awareness of the obstacles faced by VoT in Greece; - a total of 386 persons received holistic and multidisciplinary services, with an increase in female beneficiaries, while word of mouth in the refugee communities resulted in an increased flow of beneficiaries.
Main weaknesses/obstacles and how they have been addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excessive workload which risks comprising the quality of the services provided; - external factors that do not allow VoT to proceed with the difficult rehabilitation process; - no available funds for in-kind contributions in the project; - lack of appropriate shelter leaving rehabilitation practically impossible; - delays in the asylum system creating a sense of frustration; - lawyers still struggling to find the appropriate way of being therapeutic in their work; - lack of substantial vulnerability assessment during the first reception and asylum procedures; - lack of advocacy for the rights of VoT; - need of further funds for interpretation.

	While the project was successful in achieving its aims and priorities, a single physical space, with a long-term funding perspective and sufficient resources to cater for the substantial rehabilitation of VoT is necessary.
Main strengths	
Innovative elements if any	The holistic and inter/multidisciplinary approach to any need of the victim of torture. Teamwork exchange of information by meeting of all professionals together – psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, social workers, lawyers and interpreters on weekly basis.
Reproducibility/transferability elements <i>[Specify which part of the project/strategy/experience could be reproduced and the context conditions/elements for its reproducibility]</i>	The teamwork, and the holistic multidisciplinary approach in order to address the needs of the VoT in a tailored way (according to the needs demanded by each of the beneficiaries)
Sustainability <i>[Specify the project sustainability and its fund-raising possibilities, etc.]</i>	<p><u>Financial sustainability</u></p> <p>For long-term sustainability of the rehabilitation activities, the funding needs to be diversified. For this reason, the lead partner, GCR, will use the results from the current project to apply for supplementary funding. The structural funds for Greece as well as European funding mechanisms and the new Home Affairs funding instruments are targeted, yet to date have not been opened by the relevant national body. Moreover, the rehabilitation of VoT is a legal obligation of the Greek state and for this reason, a stable long-term funding from the state budget should be obtainable.</p> <p><u>Institutional sustainability</u></p> <p>During the first Prometheus Project, training was provided to 100 professionals from the public sector (asylum authorities, reception centres, hospitals), as well as private organisations (NGOs), while during Prometheus II, a further 100 professionals were trained. As a result, the organisations behind the project and the work of the Rehabilitation Unit so far has promoted better cooperation with mainstream service providers. This has been positive towards the issues related to the protection of VoT. It can be further mobilised, such as the already established perennial cooperation with the Greek Ombudsman. Such</p>

activities began by monitoring the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. This was ratified in 2014 by the Greek parliament, as well as training conducted by the members of the Rehabilitation Unit to staff of the Asylum Service.

Prometheus II is further enhancing this capacity, building on the new synergies established. Through the advocacy and awareness activities, which have been implemented during Prometheus II, and future dissemination of the results, it is the aim of the Project Partnership to further strengthen the capacity for future institutional sustainability, in a targeted and efficient manner.

Political-level sustainability

On the policy level, the Greek government needs to further implement the existing legislation, actively use the rehabilitation services available, and start building up mainstream rehabilitation services. GCR, through its general advocacy rule and its collaboration with MSF, is addressing these issues. The project manager, in cooperation with GCR's heads of staff and board of directors, and the guidelines of the steering committee, have included these issues in the advocacy strategies for 2015 and 2016, and have already held meetings with key stakeholders.

The factors that have greatly contributed to the project's sustainability are the following:

- training has increased and strengthened the capacity of professionals in Greece to provide both rehabilitation and identification services;
- training has been provided to key stakeholders and there are requests for further training throughout Greece;
- a model of collaboration and coordination between the relevant professionals which is disseminated as best practice;
- contact with medical professionals which will be further strengthened after the project has ended;
- the documentary *Those who survived* which will greatly contribute to the further dissemination of the Rehabilitation Unit's priorities;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the creation of an institutional memory in the provision of rehabilitation services to VoT that is unique in Greece.
Main lessons learnt Main weaknesses/obstacles <i>[encountered in the implementation and the ways they were overcome]</i> Main positive elements Other relevant aspects	For the weaknesses see the section (main weaknesses etc.) above. Many of them were overcome with teamwork and the interventions of the team to the public authorities. Multi- and interdisciplinary teamwork approach to the special needs of each of the beneficiaries.
Additional comments (if any)	No comments

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