HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Interior

Asylum Service

Relocation Program from Greece

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Overwhelming increase of influx via the eastern Mediterranean route

856.000 arrivals in 2015 almost 50% arrived in Lesvos. Dramatic loss of lives.
Death toll exceeds 3700.

The flow continues increasing, despite the winter period
62.716 arrivals into Greece from Turkey in January 2016
8. 002   arrivals the first week of February
19.383   arrivals the second week of February

In light of this emergency situation, European Council based on art 78(3) of the EU Functioning Treaty introduced the Emergency Relocation Mechanism by Decisions 2015 /1523 and 2015/1601 as responsibility and burden sharing system aiming to reinforce internal solidarity between the European Member States.

66,400 applicants for international protection to be transferred from Greece to Member States of Relocation over a period of 24 months.

Beneficiaries of the relocation program are nationals of:

Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Yemen and Swaziland and stateless persons with last residence the above mentioned countries, may benefit from the program

Asylum Service

Legend:
- Central Asylum Service (yellow circle)
- Regional Asylum Service (yellow triangle)
- Hotspots (red circle / blue circle)

Asylum Service is the competent authority in Greece for the implementation of the asylum procedure, including the relocation program.

Upon entry into force of the EU Decisions, **Lesvos** was selected for the first pilot implementation of the project

Implementing partners and other stakeholders **UNCHR, EASO, FRONTEX, IOM** and the Asylum Service determined their roles, the areas of cooperation and synergies, aiming to come up with a coherent procedure from the moment of initial arrival in European territory through Greek external boarders until the completion of the actual relocation transfers.

UNCHR : humanitarian support, counseling on both the asylum procedure and the relocation program, referral to the Hellenic Police for the initial registration and provision of accommodation to relocation applicants from the moment of the lodging the application until the actual transfer.

Hellenic Police performs initial registration (identification, fingerprinting, photographing, security checks)

Frontex performing nationality screening and screening on documents' fraud

EASO experts : identification of eligible relocation candidates, provision of targeted information, referral to the closest Regional Asylum Office.

Regional Asylum Offices receiving applications for international protection and registering asylum applicants in the relocation program.

Central Asylum Service/Relocation Unit processing of the application in cooperation with LO regarding all aspects of the procedure, matching, outgoing relocation requests, issue and notification of relevant decisions and preparation all necessary documents for the transfer. Referral to IOM for the remaining travel arrangements

IOM responsible for arranging the transfers and for medical screening, pre-departure counseling and orientation in cooperation with MRS LO's

Regional Asylum Office Lesvos - Started operating in September 2013

By the end of July 2015: six case workers plus two support staff

Year	Applications of International Protection
2013	30
2014	209
2015	692
2016 (up 23.2.2016)	304

Relocation applications to Greece up to 23/2/2016

Total of applications for International Protection – Relocation program up to 19/2/2016:	1136
Relocation requests submitted to Lesvos Regional Asylum Office	684
Relocation requests submitted to other Regional Asylum Offices in Greece	452

Member States [1]	Pledges	Requests submitted up to 22/2/2016	Acceptances	Rejections	Relocation Completed	Scheduled flights
Luxembourg	30	30	30		30	
Germany	40	42	40		37	
France	470	432	291	8	94	
Netherlands	50	69	62	7	48	
Latvia	10	11	6	5	6	
Romania	125	66	41		18	3/3/2016
Finland	120	116	89	4	44	
Lithuania	80	24	17		4	
Portugal	30	47	32	14	20	
Cyprus	15	16	15		6	
Ireland	10	10	10		10	
Bulgaria	110	79	45	16	2	
Poland	65	73				
Malta	6	6	6		6	1/3/2016
Czech Republic	20	18				
Estonia	8	8	7	1		
Total	1189	1047	691	55	323	

Response of MS of Relocation

Offers by few countries, only 16 out of 28 -   still the program remains unconvincing

Indication of preferences in terms of nationality or specific profile of relocation candidates by MS, not provided for in the Council Decisions regarding Relocation. Only one MS so far accepts UAM

MS request de facto an additional step to the relocation process, that is to conduct in depth interviews with all relocation candidates prior to departure, even before accepting the relocation request.

Unjustified and/or inadequately justified rejections of relocation requests for reasons not provided in the decisions

Challenges

Need of active communication for establishing relocation as the only safe and legal way to settle in Europe. Asylum seekers' life plans, dreams, aspirations and wishes- changing already formed perceptions regarding their circulation and settlement in the European territory requires repeated counseling

MS to actively support the program and overcome the administrative impediments facilitating the actual transfer by all means

Rapid changes in MS asylum policies have a direct impact on the plans of asylum seekers and call for targeted and uniform information from all stakeholders involved (national authorities, EASO – UNCHR -IOM and NGO's)

Relocation Program – future steps

Hotspots in the islands to be completed. Samos already operational. Works Chios and Leros almost completed. Kos progressing at a slower pace.

Willingness by EASO and UNCHR to "chaperone" asylum seekers through the relocation process and fill the void of smugglers. Important that UNCHR is offering reception for the relocation candidates

Authorities of MS and Liaison officers actively informing about the reception conditions in their country and consulting refugees to be relocated prior to transfer

IOM taking the lead in pre-departure counseling, medical checks and the organization of transfers.