



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Task Force Migration Management

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Brussels
HOME.TF/BG

Report on mission to Greece and Lesbos 20-21 October 2020

After Monique Pariat's mission to Greece on 12-15 October 2020 announcing the creation of the Taskforce migration management and joint pilot for Lesbos, a follow-up mission was done on 20-21 October. This allowed having targeted meetings with key interlocutors on the ground to make fast progress on the early milestones for a new reception center.

20 October 2020 – full day visit to Lesbos

1. Meetings with local and regional authorities

Bilateral meetings were held together with the Greek government with local and regional authorities on a new reception and integration center on Lesbos. Meetings took place with Governor of the Region of Northern Aegean islands, Konstantinos Moutzouris, Mayor of Mytilene, Stratis Kytelis and Mayor of West Lesbos, Taxiarchis Verros

The Secretary General of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MoMA) Manos Logothetis, Special Secretary of MoMa Evangelos Konstantinou and the Advisor of the Minister [REDACTED] were also present in the meetings.

In all meetings, the general discussion focussed on four main lines:

- (1) The island has suffered economic damage over the last five years due to migration flows, lowering also the trust in the central government. This blocks the willingness to host a new permanent reception and identification center of significant numbers.
- (2) Accelerated decongestion of the island is an important pre-condition for a new MPRIC to be constructed. For Mr. Kytelis, also the existing other centers should be closed down (temporary center Mavrovouni, Kara-Tepe and PIKPA).
- (3) EU supporting actions should help to compensate the damage suffered. A list was provided of possible projects supporting the local tourism, as well as other sectors of the local economy and infrastructure projects. Examples mentioned include construction of a new road, restoration of the area occupied by the damaged Moria RIC, supply of new equipment (eg municipal trucks) to replace equipment heavily used to also support asylum seekers.
- (4) Technical assistance would be necessary for the implementation of such actions, because the local/regional administrative capacity does not have the resources for the study, procurement, contracting and implementation.

Together with Manos Logothetis, we provided assurance that the Taskforce for Lesbos in cooperation with MoMA will examine seriously the requested support, and will discuss further with them during the next meeting in November.

2. Meeting with the group of experts performing technical site assessment.

We met the group of experts carrying out an assessment of a number of sites for the location of the new RIC in Lesvos, followed by a short tour at the premises of EASO at Pagani, and meeting with the Executive Director of EASO Nina Gregori. Main elements highlighted in the meeting:

- (1) the expert group's work is very important to ensure that the location of the site and the design of the facilities of the new RIC is compliant with the required European standards.
- (2) The experts should include in their consideration the existence of appropriate and sufficient sanitary and healthcare facilities, common areas, and dedicated areas for first arrival facilitating the efficient identification and registration of newcomers.

3. Meetings with key stakeholders at the temporary RIC at Mavrovouni

Meetings were held to explain the mandate and purpose of the Taskforce and to listen to stakeholders' feedback with (1) EASO and EUROPOL, (2) 16 NGOs: Caritas, Hellenic Red Cross, Metadrasi, Diotima, Eurorelief, Remar, Intersos, Fenix, ISRAAID, IRC, MSF, MDM, Starfish, BWC, MOTG, R4R and (3) UNHCR.

EASO and EUROPOL explained their work and constraints faced. EASO emphasized the need for modern and fully equipped premises, as eg at Pagani. EUROPOL referred to the need to update the operational plan (signed in 2016) and the need of interpreters and technical means to upgrade the secondary checks.

The NGOs explained their role and shared the challenges they see, e.g. in need for vaccinations and medical services, dedicated accommodation for vulnerable cases, safe zones for women and winterisation. In response, the different actions by MoMa tackling those concerns, and the EU support for them, were explained, reassuring NGOs that these elements were firmly on the EU-EL joint radar.

For UNHCR, [REDACTED], head of UNHCR office in Lesvos, raised the issues of the prospective closure of Kara Tepe and PIKPA and the related arrangements that need to be made. She also informed about its winterisation actions at Mavrovouni.

21 October 2020 – meetings in Athens

On 21 October, meetings were held jointly with EASO with several services of the Greek administration.

1. Meeting with Secretary General for Reception

The meeting focussed on the practical steps and arrangements necessary once MS experts would issue their report assessing the different sites for a new RIC.

The Taskforce and partners should work on the design of the new RIC. To this effect, RIS will provide all necessary statistics. A workshop will be organised to discuss the design of the new site.

The EASO Operating Plan 2021 will need to be aligned with the MoU and have clear definitions on the embedded model.

Regular meetings will be held between the three partners (COM, EASO, GR) to ensure effective coordination.

2. Meeting with Greek Asylum Service (GAS)

The meeting took stock of the progress made during 2020, with the support of the EASO Operating Plan 2020. The common goal of reducing backlog in treating asylum applications is being achieved, with critical role played by using remote interviews. And there is considerable success in relocation of unaccompanied minors (UAMs), asylum seekers but also beneficiaries of international protection.

EASO stressed that the example of Pagani demonstrated that the model of external premises is more successful than conducting the asylum procedures within the center.

The need for a chapter in the Operating Plan 2021 defining the legal responsibilities in relation to interim staff deployment was discussed, as well as a flexibility clause in order to accommodate future needs that can emerge on an ad hoc basis. Support under the Operating Plan for key strategies needs to be embedded.

3. Meeting with State Secretary for UAMs

In the meeting with SSUAM, the challenges of current legislative framework on guardianship for children on the move was highlighted. It was agreed further contact should be taken with Commission colleagues in Brussels on the issue.

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