



Press Release: Four years since the Asylum Service became operational.

In the past few days, the Asylum Service marked the fourth anniversary of its operation.

By 31 May 2017, **102,184** claims for international protection had been registered by the Asylum service. This number of claims represents a **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.

Of the registered asylum seekers, **32,983** are women, **69,201** are men and **32, 272** are minors. 0.5% of the asylum seekers are over 65 years old, while the highest percentage of registrations (49,2%) was found between the ages of 18 and 34 years old.

The Asylum Service has quadrupled in size since 2013: from the five locations from where it operated nationwide to the nine Regional Asylum Offices (RAOs) and the thirteen Asylum Units (AUs) it operates currently. The Asylum Service operates AUs in all Hotspots and Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) as well as in all pre-removal detention centers. Throughout the country, the Asylum Service is housed in accommodation which has been ceded without exception by other state services and, therefore, does not burden the state budget.

The overall recognition rate of asylum seekers stands at **35.8% counting from the first day of the operation of the Asylum Service**. There are, however, variations per year: the rate was higher before the beginning of the relocation program, but it dropped in 2016 because the Syrian applicants were included in the program and, consequently, were taken out of the national asylum procedure and did not contribute to the recognition rate. For **the first five months of 2017**, the recognition rate has risen again to **43%**; 3,140 asylum applicants in total have received international protection at the first instance, 4,207 applicants have been rejected following an examination on the merits of each case, while a total of 15,420 cases have been closed for other reasons (declared as inadmissible, discontinuation of proceedings). Recently, a special unit mandated to deal with the various legal issues of the beneficiaries of international protection has been established within the Asylum Service. The Unit is responsible, among other things, for the renewal of residence permits which have been issued to beneficiaries of international protection and which are about to expire..

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 the number of **19,970**. Of these claims, **881** persons received international protection from the hotspot locations, **8,409** persons were referred to the regular procedure due to some vulnerability or because it was decided that the applicants would not be safe in Turkey and thus the asylum procedure was continued on the mainland, **2,687** persons were referred to the Dublin procedure for family reunification, and finally **4,471** asylum claims were rejected

as inadmissible or unfounded. Moreover, **1,686 cases resulted in a discontinuation of the procedure** because of the applicants' explicit or implicit withdrawal.

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 have been sent by the Greek authorities to other European states. The relocation of approximately 8,500 asylum seekers is still expected until the end of the program on 26 September 2017.

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). Of these requests, so far, 7,251 have been accepted. Only in 2017 and until the end of May, the Asylum Service had sent 4,378 requests, of which 395 are unaccompanied minors.

The waiting time between the pre-registration and the full registration of asylum claims, from 2013 until today, is on average 102 days. The waiting time between the full registration of the claim and the issuing of the decision on the claim at the first instance is on average 107 days, while the average time from the lodging of an appeal until the issuing of the decision at the second instance is 118 days. It should be noted that the duration of the waiting time is longer when the claim has been declared inadmissible at the first instance (either because of the application of the concept of safe third country, or because of inclusion in the Relocation Program, or even because of the application of the the Dublin Regulation) than when the claim is judged on its merits. It should also be noted that the percentage of asylum claims which have been fully registered and the examination of which is pending for less than six months, is **the highest in the European Union (73% of asylum claims)**. Therefore, the asylum procedure in Greece lasts on average less than in many other Member States.

As far as unaccompanied minors are concerned, 4,401 persons have applied for international protection. Of these, 486 are girls and 3,915 are boys. In total, 374 unaccompanied minors have received international protection in Greece while several others have been included in the relocation program or in the family reunification procedure.

Concerning the Asylum Service's efforts at providing asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection with adequate and reliable information, apart from the Service's webpage, the use of social media or the operation of hotlines, the "Asylum Service App" was launched in the spring of 2017 on a pilot basis. The application allows the asylum seekers and the beneficiaries of international protection to follow all the developments in the field of asylum procedure using a mobile phone or a tablet.

As far as the resources the Asylum Service has at its disposal are concerned, it should be noted that two thirds of the Service's budget are covered by European funds (the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund - AMIF, and to a lesser extent the EEA Grants). In addition, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have all materially supported the Asylum Service.

Finally, as far as the Asylum Service's human resources are concerned, while these could be counted in the tens in 2013, at the end of May of the current year the Service is staffed by 670 employees, of whom 300 are permanent civil servants and 370 are under fixed-term contracts. Additionally, EASO has deployed 141 members of staff in the Asylum Service (Greeks and experts from other EU Member States), while the UNHCR has deployed 20 members of staff. Moreover, the work of the Asylum Service is assisted by 25 police officers and around 300 interpreters from either the NGO METAdrasi (successful contractor of a relevant competition) or EASO.

http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page_id=370

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