

Country: GREECE

Key Policy Issues Paper

1. Specific Issues

Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

Key policy issue 1

Assistance to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection / Reception capacities / Pre-removal detention Centers.

Current Situation

Up to date, nearly 40% of the past years backlog has been addressed and by the end of 2014, there is a firm expectation that 'old cases' (1st and 2nd instance) will be eliminated, whereas approximately 15 000 asylum applications [new claims] are expected in Greece. This number will further decrease in the forthcoming years due to the effective Greek border management policies.

Greece, following the last reform of the asylum institutional framework and the subsequent establishment of the new asylum services, is building up capacity in terms of standard procedures and staffing. The significant reduction of backlog and the establishment of screening procedures for mixed migration flows at border areas are indicators of the significant progress made so far. Nevertheless based on the data concerning asylum applications and consequent housing applications, the available capacity of the open accommodation centers currently operating countrywide does not cover all requests for shelter. Greece is identifying buildings to be used as open accommodation centers aiming to increase the capacity of available places by the end of the year, which should be considered as a positive endeavor, taking into account the very limited available funds.

On the other hand, social services, such as legal aid, psycho- social support, interpretation services, etc. for the support of the asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, are provided despite the significant lack of financial resources.

Moreover, effective protection of vulnerable categories is one of the priorities of the responsible services; even though institutional and administrative obstacles may create further issues. Family reunification and unaccompanied minors' guardianship are considered as priorities which should be further addressed.

Greece has developed a control system to improve and monitor the living conditions in the pre-removal detention centers. More specifically, the Hellenic Police delegates supervisor's officers on a daily basis, who are in charge of the supervision and control of the aforementioned centres. Additionally, an independent authority (Greek Ombudsman) performs periodical controls in all detention facilities ensuring detention conditions and respect of human rights of the

detainees. Greek Ombudsman is also authorized to submit reports and proposals in order to correct any deficiencies observed related to the living conditions of the detainees.

Finally, proper health care services are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Order & Citizen Protection and the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the National Health Operations Centre (Na.H.O.C.).

Desired Outcome

- Relying on the Principle of Complementarity, use AMF and Structural Funds [European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF)] to establish new services and increase accommodation capacities (infrastructures and staff).
- AMF will cover the operational and rental costs for all open accommodation centers, within the capacity of the very limited available funds.
- Set up and operate rent subsidy programs for asylum seekers, to provide a monthly rent assistance payment to these persons and help them live in their own home, until they become eligible for any form of international protection.
- Ensure that detainees/asylum seekers have access to appropriate reception conditions, especially the unaccompanied minors under the responsibility of guardians.
- Ensure training of police officers on the EU and international rules on detention.
- Set up a monitoring system of the detention conditions in the pre-removal facilities [e.g. via the Ombudsman].
- Set up a new “health care” strategy in the context of migration policy to improve health and psychological support provided to detainees and asylum seekers. Organize training programs relating to health and safety issues for employees of the First Reception and Detention Centers and communication campaigns for health issues.
- Set up a communication strategy to raise awareness on the specific situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, thus improving Greek citizens’ perception on the issue.
- Streamline the institutions and procedures provided especially for the protection of vulnerable groups, introducing better standard procedures and overcoming administrative shortcomings.
- Develop actions towards the establishment (feasibility study - pilot project- procurement) of an e-ID based system, as a centralized management information system, that a) supports the unique identification, authentication and handling of illegal immigrants in sea, land and air borders and prevents identity theft, impersonation and reissuing of temporary or permanent e-ID cards across the various First Reception Centers, b) improves the Asylum seekers applications management and c) allows effective and efficient management of the Health and Medical Status of the illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (Also linked to the policy “Effective capacity of “first reception” to manage mixed flows at the borders”).
- Ensure appropriate standards for the provision of services in accommodation centers (existing and new), in the framework of E.U. Law and procedures developed by International Organizations (UNHCR).

Key Policy Issue 2:

New Asylum Service: a fair and an efficient examination of claims for international protection

Current Situation

The new Asylum Service and Appeals Authority operate since 7th June 2013, representing the responsible authorities to apply for asylum in Greece. Meanwhile, the applications for international protection submitted before the 7th of June 2013, are processed by the Hellenic Police at the 1st instance, whereas applications at the 2nd instance are examined by 20 independent Appeal Committees established solely for the clearance of “backlog”.

Access to the asylum procedure is currently provided by three Regional Asylum Offices in Attica, Alexandroupoli (including Komotini) and Orestiada (inside Fylakio First Reception Centre). Additionally, three Regional Asylum Offices are expected to operate in Thessaloniki and the islands of Lesbos and Rodos respectively.

During the first 6 weeks of operation (07/06/2013 – 31/07/2013), the Regional Asylum Office in Attica registered 1 298 applicants for international protection, scheduled 824 interviews at 1st instance and delivered 180 decisions, whereas for the same period, the Appeals Authority received 41 appeals. Finally, Orestiada and Alexandroupoli Regional Asylum Offices registered 25 applications for international protection.

Amongst applicants for international protection, the predominant countries of origin, during 07/06/2013 – 31/07/2013, were: Afghanistan (16,6%), Pakistan (10.2%), Albania (8.6%), Georgia (8.2%), Bangladesh (7,1%), Syria (5,5%), Iraq (3.3%), Nigeria (2.5%), Eritrea (2.4%) and Morocco (2,4%).

In total, 45 UASC or other international protection applicants in need were referred to the National Center for Social Solidarity seeking shelter. This represents a six fold increase as compared to the referrals under the old system. On the basis of the above, and while significant challenges remain, not least due to the lack of adequate financial resources, significant progress is noted as regards access to the procedure and its speed.

With regards to the clearance of backlog (‘old appeals’), gradual progress is noted. It is worth mentioning that according to data published by the Hellenic Police, for the first half of 2013 3 935 asylum applications were submitted at first instance, and 2 863 appeals, while for the same period 6 440 negative decisions upon asylum applications were issued. At both instances 471 positive decisions were issued (refugee status, humanitarian status and subsidiary protection).

For the corresponding first half of 2012 4 359 asylum applications were submitted at first instance as well as 3 508 appeals, while for the given period 6 805 negative decisions upon asylum applications were issued. At both instances 229 positive decisions were issued (refugee status, humanitarian status and subsidiary protection).

Financial needs of the new Asylum Service are mainly covered by State Budget (8.9 m€) and EU funds (1.5 m€). Delays in conclusion of funding agreements with international donors (i.e. EEA Grants and ERF EM 2013) hamper provision of services that are crucial for the examination of the asylum applications, i.e. interpretation, legal aid, psychosocial support and access to examination for the identification of victims of violence.

As far the first reception issues are concerned, the competent Greek Authority take all necessary steps in order to register all new entrants, identify their needs and ensure access for all TCNs to health care and the asylum procedure, so that all migrants benefit from medical care and the identification procedures for vulnerable persons.

The Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights has already appointed a special

working group in order to re-evaluate the current legal framework governing the status of unaccompanied minors and submit proposals to improve it, especially as far as the institution of guardianship is concerned. Along with the Ministry of Justice, representatives from the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection, the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Welfare, the First Reception Service, the UN Refugee Agency and the Greek Ombudsman for Children's Rights form the Working Group, which held its first meeting on September 2013.

Desired Outcome

- Access to international protection is further facilitated through the operation of thirteen (13) Regional Asylum Offices distributed in various geographical areas of Greece, in the mainland and islands, including vulnerable groups (UASC, disabled people, single-parent families, victims of violence and torture, stateless persons).
- Develop internal quality assurance and consolidated audit and review mechanisms.
- Create strong Partnerships between the Asylum Service and Civil Society Organizations working with asylum seekers, at a local, national and European level, thus improving the level of legal assistance and court representation as well as the provision of interpretation services and psychosocial support.
- Provide interpretation, translation and transcription services for the Appeal Committees related to the clearance of backlog ('old appeals') and the new asylum system.
- Reform the institution of guardianship, thus leading to the successful application of Regulations 2013/32 and 2013/33.
- Ensure robust cooperation with other Member States in the field of international protection, particularly the Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 (Dublin III).
- Collaboration with external partners to provide specialized services towards vulnerable groups with special reception needs under the responsibility of the First Reception Service.

Integration of third country nationals (including beneficiaries of international protection)

Key Policy Issue **3**

Increased effectiveness of integration measures

Current Situation

Integration measures are necessary due to the fact that Third Country Nationals face difficulties concerning their access to services and facilities as well as to the labor market mainly due to poor knowledge of the Greek language. Taking that into consideration, Greek Authorities (Ministry of Interior) have planned and financed eight (8) projects, within the framework of EIF, with the view to inform migrants in several languages on issues related to health, education, entrepreneurship and to provide them with practical guidance on everyday life as well as with legal advice and administrative support at both national and local level.

In recent years Greece faced a dramatic increase in unemployment rates, having an impact

on both natives and migrants. The increase in unemployment rates led to a situation which is common in almost all EU countries, where migrants are facing higher unemployment rates than native's. Numerous highly skilled migrants left the country looking for better career opportunities, consequently the percentage of overqualified migrants working in Greece decreased from 75% in 2009 to 67% in 2011 (latest data available).

With respect to TCN women, who are vulnerable to exploitation, especially those employed in the domestic labour sector, two (2) studies have been financed within the framework of EIF, in order to provide input to the Greek government to elaborate specific measures to empower migrant women residing and working in the country. The first studies demonstrate the profile of migrant women working in Greece whilst the second one focuses on domestic workers.

The current economic crisis, coupled with the high influx of illegal migrants in recent years, has a certain impact on the public and political discourse (mainly in the extreme right party) and caused a rise in xenophobia specifically in city centers with high intensity of migrants.

Desired Outcome

In accordance with the European Agenda for Integration concerning the implementation of policies promoting the integration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs), including beneficiaries of international protection, Greece is pursuing the following outcomes:

- Enhanced capacity to deal with integration issues and diversity, especially among NGOs, TCN and beneficiaries of international protection and offer them the means to defend their rights.
- While maintaining, as appropriate, a horizontal approach at national level, particular attention should be paid to regional and local level, enhancing co-ordination between different governance levels and strengthening the involvement and capacities of local authorities and the cooperation between competent public bodies, NGOs and other actors.
- Enhanced culture of acceptance and understanding towards TCN and beneficiaries of international protection among the Greek society, to be achieved also through the development of a communication strategy that increases awareness and counters the negative perceptions of TCN, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.
- The linguistic and professional training of migrants.
- The cooperation with countries of origin for the recognition of skills and for matching demand and supply.
- The development of policies promoting the implementation of the Directive 2003/86/EU and more specifically the pre-departure language learning for family members.
- The implementation of capacity building policies and actions related to the gradual development of a national strategy / ies on legal migration policy, which will be based on new flexible admission procedures and human resources development, taking into account national labor market needs as well as the current financial situation and the respective potentials of Greek economy.

Effective measures for integration of all people enjoying international protection into the Greek Society. (Setting up and operating programs designed to provide services for the integration into the labor market, medical, psychological and social care of all people enjoying international protection).

Key Policy Issue 4

Development of effective policy on legal migration taking into account the needs of national labor market

Current situation

Greek policy on legal migration serves the main purpose of the effective and rational management of legal migration flows and the following specific objectives: (a) ensures the consistency of the legal framework, (b) simplifies and improves the efficiency of the administrative procedures, (c) meets the needs of the national labor market in a changing economic environment and (d) enhances legally residing third country nationals' participation in all aspects of social and economic life.

In this framework, Greek government has started, since 2009, a comprehensive effort to reform the administrative structure of the country in order to provide among others best quality services to citizens. As a first step, Greek Parliament has adopted the new Architecture for Local Government and the State by Law 3852/2010 (the "Kallikratis Project"). Following the reform of the administrative structure of the country, Law 4018/2011 establishes one-stop shop services to every decentralized authority of the country. One - stop shop services are responsible for a wide range of services related to issue of residence permits, including the entry procedure for employment of third country nationals. The functioning of the one-stop shop is targeting to significantly reduce the time required for the issuance of residence permits, to facilitate the quality of services to migrants and to improve the supervision of the whole procedure. At this stage 46 one-stop shops already have been operating throughout the country.

Concerning labor market integration of third country nationals, it should be noted that in accordance with the legislation, the management of inflows of labor force from third countries takes into account the needs of the national labor market. Such needs are defined by assessing employers' requests for foreign labor force (per specialty and sector) based on the needs of the national economy and the availability of Greek and other EU nationals. In this context, a progressively declining demand for workers Third-Country nationals is being observed and a corresponding reduction is being recorded in the number of jobs expected to be covered by third country nationals on an annual basis. The implementation of provisions concerning third country nationals invitation procedures for the purposes of work, as well as for those concerning issues of labor and social security law, is supervised by the competent control mechanisms of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Labor Inspectorate) and the social security organizations, so as to ensure the protection of rights of third country nationals workers (at both preventive and repressive level) and facilitate their integration into the national labor market. Moreover, in order to ensure the status of legally residing third country nationals workers in the country, given the recent difficult economic developments, the number of minimum wages or the minimum period of social security enrollment (per year and social security agency) required for the renewal of a residence permit was reduced.

At this stage the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the competent Ministries is in the process to complete the codification and where required the reform of the existing legal migration framework in order to better achieve the above mentioned objectives.

Moreover, in accordance with recent data, TCNs legally residing in Greece (Ministry of Interior / data 24.7.2013) are 441.731 (employment / work 78.673, family reunification 203.762, Study 6.074 & other 153.222).

Desired outcome

- Implementation of capacity building policies and actions related to the gradual development of a national strategy / ies on legal migration policy, which will be based on new flexible admission procedures and human resources development taking into account the national labor market needs, as well as the current financial situation and the respective potentials of Greek economy.
- Support the actions and policies as regards the implementation of actions by the Greek National Contact Point related to annual work programme of the European Migration Network.

Return Policy

Key Policy Issue 5:

Effective return policy – Strengthening of voluntary return, improvement of return procedures and detention conditions, and establishment of an effective forced return monitoring system.

Current situation

The Greek Government through the implementation of various measures (actions) so far has developed a specific strategy, targeting to tackle illegal migration.

Aiming to an effective management of illegal migration, repatriation of illegal immigrants to their countries of origin and introduction of new return processes form the main pillars of our strategy. Operation “Aspida” at the Greek – Turkish land borders and “Xenios Zeus” to prevent illegal migration, especially in the City Centre of Athens, form our operational strategic plan to be further expanded and cover aspects of illegal migration related to crime and illegal labor market.

For the effective implementation of our policies the main obstacles to overcome are related to, a) Difficulties in identifying immigrants’ nationality, b) Reluctance of the Consular Authorities to cooperate for the issuance of travel documents, c) the unstable political situation of several third countries producing large flows of irregular migrants and d) the “exploitation” by the majority of the illegal immigrants of the examination system for political asylum (long delays in the examination system is prompting refugees to seek asylum in Greece hopefully leading to a permanent relocation).

However the obstacles presented above, statistics indicate that the repatriation measures implemented by the Greek Authorities are indeed effective, since there is a significant increase in the number of illegal immigrants returning to their home or transit countries compared to that of 2011.

The voluntary repatriation of Third-Country nationals carried out by either the Hellenic Police or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a successful additional measure as evidenced by the significant increase of Third-Country nationals’ voluntary returns.

Finally, to address all questions raised for the detention of illegal immigrants, Greek Authorities pay particular attention to ensure the expected standard of living and hygiene conditions as well as to continue with the improvement of the facilities used for all detainees.

Desired Outcome

- AMF will cover all the operational costs (catering, cleaning and guarding services or other operational expenses) of pre-removal and Screening Centers.
- Effective cooperation with Third Countries in issuing travel documents for all TCNs on route to repatriation.
- Reinforce voluntary returns, including provision of information on the return programmes and promotion of reintegration measures to be taken by the countries of origin.
- Reduce the number of illegal TCNs placed in detention centers by speeding up the return procedure (deliverance of travel documents from third countries) and by developing alternatives to detention.
- Improvement of living conditions in the detention centers, in full conformity with the Return Directive.
- Speed up removal process by increasing the staff in charge of planning the voluntary /forced return of illegal migrants in the Greek administration/police and by further improving the cooperation with countries of origin or transit in order to increase the number of illegal TCN effectively returned and reintegrated.
- Ensuring efficiency and credibility of the forced return monitoring system.
- Substantial strengthening of the Deportation Department of Aliens Division, in order to ensure the efficiency of (compulsory and voluntary) returns.
- Continuation of the Operation “Xenios Zeus” (arrests of illegal immigrants, detention, etc.).
- Organization of educational and training programs related to: a) deportation procedures, b) readmission of TCNs, c) special treatment of vulnerable groups, d) protection of human rights.

Border management and Schengen governance

Key Policy Issue 6

Codifying a unified national strategy for border management

Current Situation

Greece, as every EU M-S, is not deprived of a national strategy for an integrated management of its external borders, while complies with all relevant EU legislation for surveillance and control of the external maritime and land borders.

Our first priority is focused on codifying and merging the national and EU strategy into a common Principle Strategy Document. This exercise is in progress, while ensuring a central coordination of the implementation of individual actions by various national authorities and agencies. The ultimate scope has remained to be a sound and uniform implementation of national and community strategy towards this issue.

We have already set our strategic priorities and actions intended to use the resources of the ISF Fund in the forthcoming period 2014-2020 and we have also identified the Union actions that will be integrated into our Investment Program.

<p><u>Desired Outcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codifying a unified national strategy on integrated external borders management, through the drafting of a national strategic plan (this initiative is already in progress). • Definition of priorities and adoption of investment plan in line with the national strategy and the overall priorities. 	
Key Policy Issue 7	Effective capacity of " first reception " to manage mixed flows at the borders
<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>In 2012 the First Reception Service under the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection was established to manage the first reception of TCNs who have illegally crossed the borders. The first fully operational "first reception center" opened in Fylakio (Evros region) in March 2013, while two (2) Mobile Units of the First Reception Service are providing all the screening services foreseen by the law, in the islands of Chios and Samos since 1st July 2013 and in the island of Lesvos since 01 October. Additionally, a First Reception Centre is under construction and will be ready to operate by the end of 2013.</p> <p>In order to consolidate the capacities of the First Reception Service and its responsiveness to manage effectively migratory flows at the borders, the agreed First Reception Centres and Mobile Units are being established.</p>	
<p><u>Desired Outcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of First Reception Centers and Mobile Units across national borders in order to manage efficiently migration flows. Funds from AMF and ISF must be secured for the construction and operation of such FRCs and Mobile Units. • Cooperation with Central Government and local authorities in order to highlight and communicate the significance of First Reception Service actions. • Set up a communication strategy to raise awareness on the tasks of FRCs, thus improving Greek and EU citizens' perception on the issue of efficient management of migration flows. • Develop quality assurance mechanisms. • Create strong partnerships between FRS and Civil society organizations working with migrants in order to improve the level of support they provide in medical, psychosocial and interpretation services. • Develop actions towards training of FRS personnel and ensure that FRS has the ability and the technical equipment to provide services in cases of extra-ordinary migration flows. 	

Key Policy Issue 8 :**Development of EUROSUR****Current Situation**

The Greek Authorities are working hard and systematically (Hellenic Police and Hellenic Coast Guard) in order to make the National Coordination Center operational within the deadline (02.12.2013). There is a study of NCC implementation while being in the process of awarding the NCC project. Although, there isn't a complete NCC, both the Hellenic Police Headquarters and the Hellenic Coast Guard have their own Coordinating Centers with the following objects:

HPH Coordinating Center :

- a) surveillance of our external land borders
- b) the control of human transportation through all the statutory entry/exit points (land, sea, air).
- c) the internal control of the country (controls of legal stay, etc.) and
- d) operational cooperation with Frontex, by conducting the 2013 Joint Operation "Poseidon" Land both in Greece and Bulgaria (the operational center ad hoc functions as an International Coordinating center (ICC)).

As far the Hellenic Coast Guard Coordinating Center is concerned:

- a) surveillance of our external maritime borders and
- b) operational cooperation with Frontex, by conducting the 2013 Joint "Poseidon" Sea operation along with our external maritime borders.

Desired Outcome

- Ensure that the Greece's National Coordination Center (NCC) meets the EUROSUR requirements as of 2 December 2013. This requires that, the Coast Guard responsible for sea border surveillance, and the Police responsible for land border surveillance, cooperate with each other via the NCC side-by-side.
- Upgrade the national situational picture for EUROSUR by including information collected at the external land borders.
- Possibility to transfer the responsibility for border checks and air border surveillance to the NCC.
- Feasibility study (phase B) for enhancing the operations of the Greek National Coordination Center (NCC) and advancement of the coordinating border surveillance and control capabilities (both sea land and air borders) including seamless cooperation with other NCC's of third countries. (Actions toward the procurement of mobile Command Post Units linked with the NCC for enhanced situational awareness at borders).

Pilot Project for the usage of Space-based capabilities (products and services) such as reconnaissance, reliable communications and precision navigation, which could provide an invaluable advantage in the field, in terms of clarity of command intentions and flexibility in the face of operational changes. [Actions for technical means/assets coordination (Surface – Naval surveillance systems, possibly Manned/Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Communications and Information Data exchange Platforms)].

Key Policy Issue 9	Effective management of external land borders, in particular of the land Greek and Turkish border
<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>The Greek-Turkish land border has been the most critical point of entry of illegal migrants into the EU. An extension of the existing automated border surveillance system has started (around 12,5 km already completed near Orestiada, with additional 35Km to be completed by the end of the year), with the possibility, if funding is available, for further extension of 90km (Alexandroupolis). After the launch of the "Shield operation" in Evros on 2nd August 2012, a dramatic decrease has been registered in illegal crossings at that land border; We manage to turn this initially vulnerable territory into the most secure border area.</p> <p>In order to address this specific vulnerable border section, Greece will put in place an effective and sustainable integrated border management system for the whole Greek-Turkish land border. The process should be based on a clear plan defining strategic, tactical and operational objectives of border control in the Evros region, with indication of both existing and still necessary equipment, transport means, infrastructure and communication structures as well as sustainable staffing (as a follow up to Operation Shield). The strategy also focuses on the further reinforcement of the cooperation between the competent Greek and Turkish authorities at a local level.</p>	
<p><u>Desired Outcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our deterrent forces/ Enhancement of our cooperation with Turkish Authorities / Achievement of a more effective operational coordination / Analysis and distribution of operational information. • Comprehensive long term strategy for the management of the Greek-Turkish land border addressing technical needs, sustainable staffing, cooperation with Turkey. • Coherent investment plan (in line with the above strategy) for all the land external borders. • Structural actions to ensure the control of the Greek-Turkish land border. • Integrated and state of the art, management system of external maritime borders including the deployment of manned and unmanned fixed and mobile sensors and surveillance systems. (Development of Regional Command Centers). 	
Key Policy Issue 10	Effective management of external maritime borders
<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>The Hellenic Coast Guard aims at the safekeeping of the state's maritime borders, policing of seas and ports, navigation safety, conducting search and rescue operations, the fight against organized crime and unlawful acts in general within its area of jurisdiction, as well as the protection of the marine environment.</p> <p>Modern threats with international implications, such as organized crime, human trafficking, financial crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal immigration and environmental pollution have evolved both in quality and quantity, have exceeded conventional measures and</p>	

have emerged as major issues, accentuating more than ever the pressing need for security and protection of citizens against all these threats.

Greece lies in the basic transit route for illegal immigrants towards the EU, while a large portion of them enters from Turkey by sea. This fact imposes the compelling need for surveillance of ships' movements in these regions and the need for immediate and drastic intervention, when and where it is deemed necessary by the prevailing circumstances.

Such circumstances and, additionally, our country's obligations, as stipulated by the applicable international, community and national legislation, as well as by the actions taken in all sectors of H.C.G.'s responsibilities, have increased exponentially;

HCG's Investment programs

In order to respond to the broad range of responsibilities, the H.C.G. has included and implemented programs co-financed, either by Community resources (External Borders Fund) or Community Initiatives or other Community Programs (3rd Community Support Framework and NSRF 2007-2013) for the procurement of equipment or the support of other actions of its remit.

N.S.R.F. actions (2007-2013)

Particularly, in the framework of NSRF 2007-2013, the following projects are implemented for the benefit of the H.C.G. in the Operational Program "Digital Convergence":

- Maritime Information System in the Citizen's Service
- E-Services / HP – FD – HCG (providing of e-services of MPOCP)
- Modernization and upgrade of the services of the European Emergency Call Number "112" using TPE for the optimal management of emergency – crisis incidents and the timely information of citizens.
- Codification of the Ministry's of Public Order and Citizen's Protection legislation

These projects concern actions that, through integration of new technologies, aim to ensure the operational readiness of Law Enforcement Agencies (H.C.G. included) by the procurement of equipment and operational means and the operational upgrading and modernization of their Services'.

At the same time, in the framework of cooperation of the H.C.G. with the Cypriot Police, a project titled "Cross-border cooperation in matters of Maritime Surveillance" is in progress in the Operational Program of Cross-border Cooperation Greece-Cyprus 2007-2013 of the objective "European Territorial Cooperation".

This project aims at better surveillance of maritime transport and maritime borders by the H.C.G. and management of safety-security challenges, mainly concerning illegal immigration and other unlawful acts (smuggling, drug trafficking, terrorism etc.). Furthermore, it is expected to contribute in the protection of the state's extensive maritime borders and reinforce the safety and security of ships and persons at the respective sea areas.

On top of these, a project proposal is under preparation in the I.P. "Reinforcement of Accessibility" concerning the upgrading and modernization of the existing VTMS system of the H.C.G., a project necessary to ensure and upgrade the operation of the system of management of maritime traffic.

Through the abovementioned programs and interventions the achieved goals contributed to:

- The organization and modernization of the H.C.G. with the use of "smart" systems of surveillance, the introduction of state-of-the-art communication systems and the introduction and use of informatics in administration and information management.
- The substantial improvement of law enforcement in the maritime domain with the renewal of the operational means of the H.C.G. and the procurement of off shore

patrol vessels, helicopters and airplanes.

- The adaptation of HCG personnel's training programs.
- The enhancement of safety-security of sea travelers (passengers, cargo and ships).
- The protection of the marine environment

Desired Outcome

- The gradual development of an integrated system of maritime surveillance through the installment of new fixed systems of surveillance in the perimeter of the external maritime borders (main priority being the coverage of the Eastern Aegean Sea area, followed by the gradual expansion over the whole stretch of the state's coastline) and through the interoperability of all maritime surveillance systems within a single information sharing environment (both in the frameworks of EUROSUR and CISE)
- The operational sustainability of existing assets and equipment (safeguard operational support, development adapted to the requirements of the operational environment)
- The safeguarding and upgrade of operational suitability of assets and equipment
- The acquisition of new assets and equipment either in replacement of older units or the procurement of modern ones to be set at the disposal of Frontex-coordinated JOs (e.g. gradual replacement of worn-out regional patrol boats by new ones within a five-year period, procurement of new OPV, full operational exploitation of air assets round the clock and over the entire maritime, with a parallel enhancement of their surveillance equipment and an examination of the feasibility of their distribution to strategic points of the external maritime borders)
- Acquisition – use of innovative systems of aerial surveillance for the saving of resources and the maximization of effectiveness (e.g. UAVs, hot-air balloons, with the prerequisite of ensuring an appropriate legal framework for their operational exploitation in cooperation with the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority and other domestically competent Agencies)
- The upgrade of cross-border, serious and organized crime prevention and suppression capabilities (e.g. via the reinforcement of interagency cooperation on a national level and of the international cooperation – interconnection – data and information exchange with competent national law enforcement authorities and other national and foreign services)
- Improvement of the port infrastructure security/safety and protection environment of the state (security/safety of infrastructure of vital importance) from terrorist or other threats.

Key Policy Issue 11

Implementation of the Schengen acquis

Current Situation

According to the latest Schengen Evaluation, weaknesses were identified as regards the establishment of the National Coordination Center for EUROSUR (*see policy issue n°8*), the need to reinforce the monitoring and coordination between activities at regional and central level, the need to remedy weaknesses detected for border checks, the need to reinforce training, the need to establish a five- year investment plan based on priorities at land, sea and air borders, the need to reinforce investments in the Evros region (*see policy issue n°9*). It should also be noted that new shortcomings might arise, following the next Schengen Evaluation visit foreseen for 20-25

October 2013.

Desired Outcome

- Implementation of recommendations and actions from Schengen Evaluation reports.
- Development of an investment Plan including CAPEX and OPEX (implementation of EUROSUR initiatives and the Schengen Acquis requirements).
- Effective implementation of the Schengen acquis to the land, maritime and air borders.

Internal Security

Key Policy Issue **12**

Drug Trafficking

Current Situation

It should be stressed that the national legislative framework (Law 4139/2013)- fully complied with the EU strategy in the fight of drugs (2013-2020)- is sufficient and has been up to date providing stricter punishment for traders-traffickers and introducing lenient treatment for drug users.

Greek Authorities have developed an Operational Program against drugs and they have implemented a National Policy Against Crime. This policy includes both preventive and repressive measures and for this purpose, an IT network has been developed for the achievement of a better evaluation of information at a local, regional and central level. Moreover, this is directly linked with the efficiency of cooperation among the Authorities actively involved in the field of borders surveillance.

Also, the Hellenic Police takes initiatives by promoting partnerships with law enforcement agencies in other countries and participates in international working groups being an active member of the Regional Cooperation Initiative (Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Cooperation Initiative Adriatic and Ionian Islands, etc.).

In order to fight against organized crime, mainly cross-border drug trafficking, especially from Albania and Bulgaria, a program of cross-border cooperation is applied and for this purpose regular meetings between representatives of the two Balkan countries have taken place.

Furthermore, in the Ministry of Interior there is a National Coordination Committee against drugs and it is composed of representatives of all four law enforcement authorities (Hellenic Police, Customs, Coast Guard and police Economic Crime).

Desired Outcome

- Increase the effectiveness of Greek authorities (Combating efficiently the trafficking of weapons, establishment of a central Police Division responsible for collecting and management of strategic and operational information).
- Enhancement of the cooperation among the EU Member States and Agencies.

- Effective use of advanced technology (for example body checking in/out control systems at national airports with the use of new X-ray human body scanning machines and screening vehicles).

Key Policy Issue 13

Trafficking in Human Beings

Current Situation

The Directives 2011/36/EU, 2002/629/JHA and 2011/92/EU are in process of transposition into the Greek legislative framework.

The relevant draft law puts into effect rules regarding the definition of penal offences and punishments in the field of human trafficking, the crime prevention and victim protection, which should be very beneficial for society regarding the mutual trust among people and the trust to the law.

Furthermore, this draft law will set up a National Advocate Bureau defining the coordinating role which has been played now by the Ministry of Foreign affairs in cooperation with other Ministries, NGOs and IOM. It also guarantees better evaluation of evidence provided by victims/witnesses during the penal procedure thanks to a new system of special training and use of appropriate tools.

Finally, it helps with the establishment of international cooperation and guarantees the participation of members of Public Administration in specialized EU Programs.

Regarding the reported rate of convictions in Greece, we should underline that there has been a tremendous reduction in the number of human trafficking prosecutions in the last years due to the eradication of notorious criminal organizations and the arrest of their leading members directly connected with international criminal sects.

Finally, the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection has put into effect the program called "Ilaira" since 2006 in order to fight against female and underage illegal labor at national and international level.

So, to conclude, it is estimated that there is no need for implementation of new programs regarding new trafficking due to the forthcoming draft law and the existing "ilaira" program being in process.

Desired Outcome

- Effective prevention, protection, detection and prosecution of THB, including compensation and other forms of assistance to victims of THB through durable solutions.
- Reduced demand in all forms of THB and higher number of proactive investigations and confiscations of instruments/benefits of THB.
- Improvement of national referral mechanism, increased operational capacities of first line responders, and increased cooperation with civil society organisations nationwide.
- Enhanced training and cooperation between the different actors, including police, labor inspectors, immigration and asylum officials, border guards, trade unions, civil society organisations, etc.
- Improved data collection and reporting.
- Enhancing the operational capacity of the THB personnel with advanced applied security solutions for the effective management of THB victims at all stages.

Key Policy Issue 14

Anti-corruption policy (in particular in public procurement procedures)

Current Situation

The Greece Government has positioned a “National Coordinator for Combating Corruption”, established by the Law 4152/2013. The “National Coordinator for Combating Corruption” reports directly to the Prime Minister and has the following responsibilities:

- Development of a national strategy in order to combat corruption at all (political, governmental, judicial, administrative) levels of the public sector.
- Constant monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the national strategy against corruption and coordination of all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the aforementioned strategy.

Furthermore Greek authorities have developed:

- a) A Roadmap of fighting against corruption.
- b) A National plan against corruption, named "TRANSPARENCY".

Specific (Preventive and Suppressive) measures taken against corruption which are the following:

- Establishment of a unified Public Procurement Authority responsible for and carried out all the public procurements, implementation of the program “Diavgeia” (under the Law 3861/2010), imposing the publication of governmental and administrative institution acts and decisions via the internet,
- Establishment and implementation of the “Central Electronic Registry of Contracts” under the supervision of the General Secretariat of Commerce (Law 4013/2011), recording the following: i) all requests for goods, services and public works procurement along with their estimated cost, ii) full list of contacts related to goods, services and public works, total costs and full data of undertakers and iii) all the payments regarding signed contracts or direct assignments.
- Establishment of the “National e-procurement system” by the Law 4155/2013, which introducing obligatory " computerization " of procedures at all stages of procurement, with

the view to achieving simplification of the procedure, reduction of bureaucratic burdens and of course, transparency. Furthermore, contracts exceeding the amount of 1 million € are previously checked by the “National Court of Audit”.

Desired Outcome

- Effective implementation of the anti-corruption related measures to be covered by the future public procurement reform strategy.
- Strengthened and coordinated ex-ante and ex-post controls of the legality and integrity of procurement procedures.
- Enhanced cooperation between public procurement authorities and anti-corruption authorities that would lead to increased detection and dissuasive sanctioning of corruption practices (including conflicts of interests and favouritism).
- Set up an appropriate legal framework in line with other European countries in the field of preventing and combating corruption through elimination of tax evasion.

Key Policy Issue 15

Develop financial investigation in all serious and organized crime cases to: dismantle criminal networks, provide prosecutable evidence before the judge, develop monitoring and detection tools and trace criminal assets.

Current Situation

Organized financial crime provokes a lot of distortions such as the undermining of legitimate trade, illegal immigration, undeclared work, corruption, and thus it affects seriously not only the national economy but also the EU Community interest. The Economic Police and Cyber Crime Unit were established by the P.D. (9/2011) focusing on the research, prevention and repression of financial crimes and especially those committed at the expense of the financial interests of the national economy and the states insurance organizations. Despite the fact that the Economic Police and Cyber Crime Unit is a new one, it has successfully dealt with many crime cases so far. Apart from this Unit there is another similar task Public Body fighting against economic crime and fraud, called SDOE (Financial and Economic Crime Unit) under the Ministry of Finance.

Nevertheless, there are still issues to be solved regarding dealing with economic crime effectively, such as the implementation of new FATF criteria.

Desired Outcome

- Adoption of best practices applied by European Countries experienced in tackling organized crime and more specifically in relation to money laundering, asset recovery, fraud and corruption prevention.
- Compliance with FATF new standards.
- Further development of cooperation at a national and international level (bilateral and multilateral), with services such as EUROPOL and INTERPOL with which our country is

already cooperating, through the designation of national experts in focal Points (FP) at Europol, regarding money laundering activities, counterfeited goods trafficking and tobacco smuggling.

- Strengthening of the cooperation with the National Asset Recovery Office, through the development of a computerized data exchange system and enhancement of the collaboration with the corresponding EU countries Offices.
- Personnel training.
- Deployment of qualified personnel, (financial analysts, computer engineers, statistical analysis specialists, lawyers and prosecutors), participating in surveys.
- Access to an exchanging information platform for the acquisition of shared information among the cooperating Offices, such as banking institutions, agencies of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor, insurers, Land Registries , etc.
- Development and deployment of an information system that will use and analyze crime activity data collected by law enforcement agencies for detecting crime density areas (hot spots) and criminality spatial patterns. Spatial analysis tools, GIS and spatial reasoning will be used for mapping crime activity clumps by street, neighborhood or larger geographic areas, identifying and understanding hot spots and their evolution in time.

Key Policy Issue 16 :

Weak implementation of information exchange mechanisms (Prüm Decision) and Swedish Initiative

Current Situation

The exchange of information is the core mechanism of law enforcement cooperation in the EU. The so- called "Swedish Initiative" and the "Prüm Decision" are two key instruments in this area. Although the deadline for implementation of those mechanisms was 19 December 2008 and 26 August 2011 respectively, Greece has not yet fully implemented these legal acts. The Swedish Initiative has not yet been transposed into national law and, regarding the "Prüm Decision", Greece is not yet operational in the automated exchange of DNA, fingerprints and vehicle registration data. It is true that there is a delay due to internal legal and administrative procedures in the implementation of the Prüm Decision due to legal obstacles. Apart from this and according to the official DAPIX document 5074/4/13 REV (State Of Play) our State has already installed CODIS 7.0 software (For DNA purpose) and it is in awarding procedure for new AFIS (For Dactyloscopic purpose).

According to Prüm Decision (art. 12 of 2008/615/JHA and art. 15 of 2008/616/JHA) with regards to exchange information of VRD, Greece (Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport & Networks) has just started the implementation of the necessary technical steps for the exchange of VRD via EUCARIS (incoming and outgoing requests). Greece has already contacted Eucaris Secretariat in order to obtain the Eucaris application and pay the required cost.

Desired Outcome

- Greece will follow all the appropriate functions in order to fully implement Prüm Decision.
- Regarding transposition of the Swedish initiative, there are pending legal actions.

- In the context of the reorganization of the Hellenic Police Services, the creation of a SPOC responsible for international information sharing has been studied and proposed always under the supervision of the Hellenic Police Headquarters.
- Deployment of applications which are going to communicate with Eucaris System for the exchange of VRD via automated searching procedures. Two applications needed for incoming and outgoing requests.
- Achieving full compatibility of the Greek database “Online vehicle registration System” with EUCARIS System for the exchange of VRD via automated searching.
- Feasibility study for the identification and prioritisation of the steps needed for meeting the above mentioned outcomes of this Key Policy.

Key Policy Issue 17

**Improve capabilities in the fight against
cybercrime at national level and contribute to
improvement at EU level**

Current Situation

The Hellenic Police Informatics Division is responsible for the development, IT support, monitoring and management of all types of communication networks and Information Systems.

This Division is cooperating with,

- a) the “National Authority against online attacks”, according to Law 3649/2008 (Article 4, paragraph 8) and,
- b) the “Information Security Authority” (INFOSEC), according to PD 325/2003 (Article 2 paragraph 4) in order to manage and ensure the security of information systems.

Furthermore, in the context of our social policy, the “Economic Police and Cyber Crime Unit” organizes a series of actions in order to ensure safe web browsing. The Unit conducts workshops in various cities of Greece, while organizing informative videoconferences in schools and has also distributed educational and informative material about the internet and its dangers. It is worth mentioning that, a special website is available where anyone can visit and informed for safe Internet surfing.

Desired Outcome

- Training of personnel on, a) new technologies and b) treatment in advanced forms of Cybercrime.
- Procurement of specialized equipment and software, so as to combat various forms of Cybercrime, such as data crawling and data mining and installation of perimeter security Web Application Firewall (WAF) to protect the Web site of the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection, which constitutes a target of cyber attack on a daily basis.
- Cooperation with other EU Member States to share best practices and knowledge, as well as other institutions and organizations such as Safeline, Safer Internet in order to organize campaigns on cybercrime.
- Protection of data networks from misuse by the end users through the recording of unauthorized actions and regular inspections so as to ensure the compliance with the specifications of security.
- Development of a National Cyber Security Strategy towards highlighting the importance of ICTs to the nation, identifying and evaluating potential risks and threats (e.g. cyber - attacks, cybercrime, etc.), establishing cyber-security related objectives, identifying the required actions towards this direction and setting out the roles and objectives of all

stakeholders in the process.

- Active participation to the European Cybercrime Centre at Europol (EC3) and establishment of a national cyber-crime center to be the platform to and from the European Cyber Crime Center (EC3), an accredited member of 2CENTRE (Cybercrime Centers of Excellence Network for Training Research and Education) for,
 - a) promoting cooperation in cyber-crime investigation and research,
 - b) reinforcing cooperation of law enforcement authorities and improving cooperation between Member States,
 - c) stimulating cyber-security preparedness and raising awareness,
 - d) supporting the private- public dialogue of all related stakeholders (research/academia, CERTs, law enforcement practitioners and the private sector).
- Support, upgrade and maintenance of National Law Enforcement Agencies and relevant Cyber-Security stakeholders IT systems.

Key Policy Issue 18

Radicalization towards terrorism and violent extremism

Current Situation

It is a well-known fact that the terrorism phenomenon lurks many dangers for the international security environment. In this context, special attention is given by the Greek Government in dealing with extremist and terrorist structures. Lately, the Country is on the alert with regards to the left-wing terrorism, but most crucially with the recent far right wing criminal action, added to the already existing high rate of racist attacks against migrants and asylum seekers both in Athens and elsewhere by far right wing extremists. What's more, explosives and automatic weapons have been used in organized armed terrorist attacks against State institutions, public areas like shopping malls, media buildings, diplomatic agencies and police departments.

Acknowledging the high levels of xenophobic violence, the government created specialized police units to address the issue.

Desired Outcome

- Enhance awareness of the phenomenon of radicalisation process among frontline practitioners.
- Increase know-how to prevent, analyze and tackle the phenomenon of radicalisation process.
- Establish partnerships and platforms for knowledge and exchange of information and experience between practitioners and stakeholders, based on the experience of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN).
- Organize trainings for Police Officers related to the phenomenon of radicalisation process.
- Take initiatives challenging terrorist propaganda, including initiatives promoted by victims of terrorism.
- Establish a Greek national Contact Point as part of the RAN. This single PoC will unify the efforts of various actors in Greece (Government, Universities, practitioners, experts, NGOs etc.) for harmonizing radicalization in Greece within the RAN framework.

Key Policy Issue 19	Substantial improvement of management capacities of Greek administration to ensure adequate management of EU funding in the area of Home Affairs
<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>Creating two (instead of current four) Funds and putting into practice new simplification procedures in the next MFF will give us the opportunity to proceed significant changes in the field of management of EU Funds. We have already speed up internal consultations regarding the new structure of the Responsible and Audit Authority complied with all the appropriate designation criteria demanded. Actually, we will have one RA and AA for the two Funds. Furthermore, we are in process of preparing a new draft legislative act which elaborates the tasks of Responsible and Audit Authority while designating/appointing two expert groups who will carry out the Multi-annual Programme preparation. At the same time, we try enhancing the current mostly used and variable documents (like MoU and Grant Agreements) and Computerized Systems as well, in order not only to establish a reliable and efficient Management and Control System, but also to achieve better monitoring having clear picture about the state of play of actions (the phases of public procurement).</p> <p>As from the side of Associated Bodies¹ (Hellenic Police Headquarters, Hellenic Coast Guard and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) they are in process of facilitating the internal workflows and procedures avoiding any national administrative delays which could be arised/ come up among many Ministries involved in the Public Procurement procedure. For instance, the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection will set up an individual Division whose tasks (appropriate technical specifications, preparation of tender documents) are focused mainly on a sound and smooth implementation of actions granted by EU Funds. In this context, Greek authorities are eager to accept any support from FRONTEX experience having the willingness for a closer cooperation in the field of technical specification.</p>	
<p><u>Desired Outcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective management structure (legal and institutional aspects) in place as of 2014. • Significant improvement of administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management of EU Funds (managing authorities and beneficiaries), including as regards internal coordination and staffing. • Significant improvement in procurement process, especially of its preparatory stages (multiannual planning, drafting of technical specifications, preparation of tender documents, etc.). 	
Key Policy Issue 20	Protection of National Critical Infrastructures

¹ Due to de jure monopoly,

Current Situation

Greece, harmonized national legislation (PD 39/2011) with European Council Directive 2008/114, has appointed the Center for Security Studies as the National Contact Point. Concrete actions are required to continue on-going activities that will result in the creation and maintenance of a high level of CI protection. Establish an effective partnership framework that fosters integrated, collaborative engagement and interaction among public- and private-sector partners so that CI can achieve a high level of protection. Develop centralized structures to collect and process vast amount of data from heterogeneous sources, which will be converted into real time risk assessment products and distributed to CI operators.

Desired Outcome

- Strengthen administrative and operational capability to protect critical assets.
- Increase security capabilities specific to terrorist crises in view to enhance preparedness and response capabilities in case of terrorist attacks to critical infrastructures.
- Maintain a high level of societal resilience and increase preparedness through advanced risk assessment.

General Key Policy Issues

Internal security

Key Policy Issue **21**

EU policy cycle on serious and organized crime - participation of Greece

Current Situation

The full implementation of the policy cycle is a prime goal for the European Union and Greece as well.

Greece is obliged to actively participate in the implementation of the following strategies : illegal immigration, counterfeited products, cybercrime, illegal trafficking and use of weapons. Furthermore, the Hellenic Police is actively participated in the following programs,

- a) Operational Plan EMPACT on illegal immigration.
- b) Operational Action Plan EMPACT in the Western Balkans.
- c) Operational Plan EMPACT for Human Trafficking.
- d) Operational Plan EMPACT for Cybercrime.

The establishment of a central Service for the collection and management of operational and strategic information, directly connected to Europol will crucially contribute to the achievement of the desired EU policy-cycle target.

<p><u>Desired Outcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase engagement of Greece in the new policy cycle 2013-2017 especially regarding the following SOCTA (Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment by Europol) recommendations. • Reinforce national infrastructures for data collection and analysis concerning international organized crime, as well as their transmission to Europol, which are precondition for EU Member States' participation in policy cycle. • Align the national legislative framework with the other EU M-S legislation, in the field of organized crime network and counterfeit product trafficking. • Reinforce the cooperation with other international trade companies, taking intense action in the Community territory. • Organize training of police officers in cooperation with international trade companies and other internationally recognized experts in the field of counterfeit product trafficking investigation. • Creation of a network of information for the detection of counterfeited product sources. 	
Key Policy Issue 22	Implementation of the EU Law Enforcement Training Scheme (LETS)
<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>Greek authorities (Hellenic Police Headquarters / Central Educational Division) are fully aware of how important policy area the LETS is. To this context, it has already developed and launched many actions complying with the four areas of LETS. In addition, Greek authorities have actively contributed in many educational activities carried out by CEPOL and it needs to be stressed that we are in the first position among other EU M-S on conducting / implementing web seminars (webinars).</p>	
<p><u>Desired outcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve cross-border law enforcement cooperation. • Improve a cross-border minded culture of law enforcement officers through training. • Establish a multi-purpose training facility, combining field training with augmented virtual reality and capability to adapt to different types of threats and environments. 	
Key Policy Issue 23	Use modern technology at the borders
<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>Greek Authorities have the willingness to implement new and efficient ways of external border management accepting EC proposals related to «Smart Borders». With the view of facilitating travel of EU Citizens and in the future also of Registered Travellers, Greek Authorities are , indeed, encouraged to start using them our crossing points.</p> <p>For instance, Greek authorities are in close cooperation with the Austrian Institute of Technology to a research project, called FAST-PASS related to the establishment of Automated</p>	

Border Control mechanisms.

Desired Outcome

- Investment Planning is needed for the installation of modern technological tools that will be the future components of an advanced Automated Border Control System (ABCs) to facilitate border control authorities at busy crosser points.
- Feasibility study implementation for the creation of a valid Investment Plan for all border control points of Greece that will take into account a multitude of factors.
- Investment leading to use of interoperable modern technologies in line with European standards where they exist. For example ABC gates for EU citizens should also be able to be used for the future Registered Traveller Programme (RTP) component of the smart borders initiative, by implementing fingerprint readers. (For example, Procurement of RTP, Entry-Exit System and Smart Police Vehicles).

Key Policy Issue **24**

The implementation of Visa Information System and increasing the consular coverage in Schengen Visa issuance

Current Situation

For Greece, proper application of VIS, modernisation of consular services, expansion of consular network, HR education and training, innovation and flexibility will remain a priority over the next years.

The implementation of the Visa code and the Visa handbook has created new opportunities, mainly through the cooperation with the External Service Providers and commercial intermediaries (articles 43 and 45 of the Visa Code) increasing the number of the short stay visas for tourism from markets that were unknown for Greece the previous years. Additionally the introduction to our national law of new national visas types for investment purposes, mainly in real estate works as a pull factor and creates a new visa trends.

For the aforementioned reasons the migration flows have increased and at the same time the number of Visa applications have grown significantly. In 2012, the total number of Schengen Visas issued by the Greek Consulate Authorities was 994.265, increased 30,25%, in comparison to the Visas issued in 2011 (763.329).

Thus the Greek Consular Authorities are facing, the following difficulties:

- The Visa issuing process management has become a complex task, due to the aforementioned increased numbers of visa applications and the introduction of VIS (the need of having optimal quality of biometric and alphanumeric data).
- Many applicants are submitting forged documents to the Consular Authorities.
- Various types of alleged “marriages of convenience” have been reported by Greek Consulates.
- The instability in the Mediterranean has created several malfunctions in the local Greek Consulate Authorities and created new Visa trends, ie several applications from EU family members.
- Due to the national budgetary constraints several Consulate Authorities changed premises or are planning to move in the future.

- The addition of new categories in EU legislation and future developments, like the Directives for ICT's, "Blue Card" workers, seasonal workers, researchers etc, and the development of the national legislation, like national investment visas for real estate owners, are expected to create additional administrative burden for Consular Authorities and the consequent need to have continuous training for the staff.

Finally, the implementation of VIS upgraded equipment/infrastructure for visa issuing of the Greek Consulate Authorities and increased the operational telecommunication costs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a very disproportionate way, given the current financial situation of Greece and its budgetary constraints.

Desired Outcome

- Anti-fraud actions (falsification of documents) as an individual MS and along with other MS or FRONTEX and EUROPOL.
- Upgrading of the IT infrastructure and line band-width that will lead to a faster and uninterrupted network that will be up and running even when the network is on its peak period.
- Training (in house and in situ) of the personnel on VIS operation and biometric and alphanumeric data (including training for trainers), Schengen rules and forgery recognition. Additionally, it is proposed to create a training unit in the MFA premises and mobile stations.
- Posting "field workers" (MFA employees) in consulates who will a) support the acceleration and improvement of visa processing for third country nationals at all stages, b) reduce misuse and abuse of visa applications, including "visa-shopping" (detect false or falsified documents), c) accelerate the issuing of visas to bona fide travellers d) cooperate with other Member States as regards the flows of third-country nationals into the territory of the Member States and the processing and issuing of visa.
- cooperate locally with other MS authorities to deal specifically with operational issues in relation to the application of the common visa policy as regards third country nationals.
- Relocation of Consulates due to the cuts in public spending (including cabling and infrastructure expenses) or renovation of some Consular Authorities according to the Best Practices that COM has set regarding the collection of data.

Key Policy Issue **25**

The implementation of Schengen Information System II, including development of backup capability

Current Situation

SIS II has been in operation since 9 April 2013. As the SIS II is fundamental for the functioning of the Schengen Area, maintaining it fully operational should present a core priority for all Member States, in particular by ensuring the necessary infrastructure for the system and for its operation, and allowing the evolution of the national components in line with the evolutions agreed for the central system. Equally important, the running of the SIRENE offices should also be treated as a high priority, both in terms of adequate staffing and appropriate technical support.

As a mission critical system for the security of the Schengen area and the management of migration, SIS II is a high availability system, requiring 24/7 access for users. Therefore, it is essential that it has a full disaster recovery/business continuity plan.

As of today, SIS II contains approximately 48 million sensitive records, out of which more than 1 million are on identity (and related) information on persons, including witnesses in criminal procedures or persons subject to discreet checks due to the threat they represent to public or national security. Accordingly, the protection of both the persons concerned, as well as the security within the Schengen area must be adequately ensured at the national level too, including via up-to- date cyber security measures.

Desired outcome

- SIS II is available and in full operation.
- Implementation of a full disaster recovery/business continuity plan which includes, depending on national architecture, elements such as: full national system redundancy on identified key components/processes, with a stand-by arrangement guaranteeing industry standards, continuity of service, as well as a further fall-back plan, with mechanisms to switch to queries in central SIS II when national queries are no longer available from the national site.
- SIS II national system is resilient to cyber-attacks in terms of physical, computer and data security.

Key Policy Issue **26**

Development of communication strategy aiming at raising general awareness on EU Home Affairs policies

Desired Outcome

In view of strengthening EU policies in the area of Home Affairs, each EU Member State is invited to develop communication strategies that would allow to raise the awareness of the population in general and target groups in particular on the measures being taken at EU level.

The head of European and Development Programs Division / Ministry of Public order and Citizen Protection

Panagiotis MARKETAKIS
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