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Dear Colleagues,

My sincere wishes for a Joyful and Creative New Year!

Apparently, Greece started 2021 with a Governmental reform (Mr Mitarakis remains Minister for migration and Asylum. Mrs Voultepsi is appointed as the new Alternate Minister for integration – Koumoutsakos not renewed).

It should be also noted that recently (23/12) the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic published the [Consolidated Government Policy Plan 2021](#) defining the policy priorities for each Ministry ([info is also available on IDS](#)).

The priorities for the **Ministry for Migration and Asylum in 2021** are defined as follows (in bold and yellow elements that might be of interest):

In order to achieve its goal, the Ministry follows a policy that **strengthens border surveillance, speeds up asylum procedures and proceeds with a clear distinction of refugees from economic migrants**. In this direction, an extensive redesign of the operating framework of the accommodation structures for asylum seekers with emphasis on security is attempted, while the Ministry creates all the necessary conditions for the smooth integration of beneficiaries of international protection into Greek society by strengthening the respective policies and the digitalization of the legal migration procedure. In addition, an important goal is the reorganization of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum itself through the integration of new digital tools to simplify the procedures.

The increase of migratory flows, the economic crisis of the previous years and Covid-19 are major challenges affecting job market and social inclusion. The Ministry needs to address also the financial gap due to the transition from the 2014-2020 programming period to the new multiannual program without the flexible financial tools of the past.

At the same time, through legislative and diplomatic initiatives, the Ministry aims to **increase the returns** of those who are not entitled to international protection, both to Turkey and to their countries of origin, which are currently at low levels.

Furthermore, the interoperability between the new information systems of the Ministry and the synergy with third parties requires key interventions at multiple levels as well as coordination. The long-standing problem of understaffing of the Ministry is addressed with significant recruitments, while the use of new technologies enhances security in the structures. Finally, the treatment of Covid19 cases in the structures puts the Ministry on constant vigilance. In this direction, the Ministry, among other actions, created the operational plan AGNODIKI to deal with the spread of the coronavirus in reception and accommodation structures of third country nationals.

The transition to the digital era is marked by a series of reforms aiming at speeding up the asylum procedures and will include a detailed record of asylum seekers, while ensuring interoperability across all databases. At the same time, the transmission of video and audio from the facilities to the new central Operations Centre of the Ministry and co-competent bodies (Hellenic Police, Ministry of National Defence, Port authorities) will be made available.

Further, after the regulation of all the inland structures under state management, the Ministry proceeds with the standardization of procedures and the model of closed controlled structures. Important reforms will be realized concerning unaccompanied minors and in particular the establishment of a stable mechanism for relocating them to other EU Member States and the framework of their long-term hospitality with emphasis on their social inclusion.

Additionally, the reform of residence permits in a more flexible direction is equally important for 2021. Finally, the provision of compensatory benefits to localities/regions through the Solidarity Fund and the payment of municipal fees by the State to municipalities hosting asylum seekers is regulated and extended over time.

Main projects for 2021:

- **the innovative closed controlled structures** to operate on the islands and inland with multiple levels of security envisaged for its residents as well as the local areas, such as the systems HYPERION (regarding the entrance - exit with card and fingerprinting system), the integrated digital system KENTAVROS (for the management of digital and physical security along the perimeter and inside the premises) and REA (with the operation of telecommunications infrastructure in temporary reception structures), while the creation of external fencing in all structures will enhance the sense of security for the local societies. Along with the digital asylum management system and the automatic notification of decisions via ALKYONI II, the Ministry consolidates and upgrades the existing electronic decision-making, tele-interviewing and tele-interpretation, achieving uniform management of all asylum procedures, comprehensive information to all stakeholders, saving human resources as well as reducing the average time to process requests.
- special national **registry for minors** that will enable access to all competent authorities as well as interoperability with EU member states databases.
- legislative reform for the protection of **unaccompanied minors** to be adopted in early 2021, internationalization of UAMs, their relocation to EUMSs in an effort to establish a stable relocation mechanism, termination of protective custody in detention facilities, transfer in long-term hospitality which aims to their social inclusion.
- regarding **social inclusion**, the Ministry creates an electronic platform to monitor all inclusion activities with a view to create synergies and enhance coordination. Aiming at an holistic social inclusion model, training and job counselling will play a key role. A comprehensive integration program is planned, which will include a complete mapping the skills of beneficiaries of international protection and matching them with needs of the Greek market, in collaboration with the Local Government Authorities. In this context, an educational program for Greek studies and vocational training is developed along with the training of intercultural mediators.
- **In the EU level**, the Ministry will promote the role of Greece as a front-line country and its contribution in managing the migratory issue. The ultimate goal is the development of an effective solidarity mechanism in times of migratory pressures. It will also strengthen the role of Greece in the consultation of the common European policy for returns. Finally, through diplomatic contacts it will strengthen the relocation to Member States in the context of European solidarity, which includes, in addition to unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers, recognized refugees and persons with disabilities or with serious diseases.
- support hospitals and Health Centers to address the pandemic challenges. A Project Management Office (PMO) will provide technical support to municipalities where closed controlled centers will operate. The Ministry will continue the accreditation of NGOs monitoring their activities to ensure transparency and accountability.
- The **decongestion of the national reception system**, mainly on the islands, is also a priority of the Ministry with the exit of the recognized refugees or those whose asylum application has been permanently rejected, tightening the framework for benefits but also the creation of a special structure inland for the population coming from the islands.
- In the field of **legal immigration**, in addition to the digitization of the procedures aiming at reducing bureaucracy and time needed, the Ministry is improving the procedures for issuing residence permits with a view to strengthening the national economy via the issuance of residence permits with financial or professional scope.

The implementation of the objectives of the Ministry is largely based on the adoption **of indicators that capture the expected results**. Indicatively, **the following indicators apply: the number of Closed Controlled Structures that will operate on islands and inland is estimated at 30 by the end of 2021, processing of pending asylum applications is estimated at 100% (backlog), the decongestion of the Island Reception System through the transfer of 20,000 people by the end of 2021 and the electronic submission of all applications for stay permits (first time and renewals).**

The budget of the Ministry amounts to 128 million euros and 299 employees are expected to be recruited.

Best regards,



