

The Greek asylum system in 2020 – Key observations

- The Greek asylum system has been operating in a declared crisis mode for more than four consecutive years, as illustrated by the trigger of the fast-track border procedure in April 2016 and its uninterrupted implementation until the end of 2020. The response of the Greek State to all aspects of refugee protection (accommodation, health care, interpretation, legal aid) largely remains project-based and dependent upon time-limited EU funding which does not guarantee continuity and sustainability of support.

Asylum procedure

- Access to the asylum procedure persistently ineffective, as asylum seekers continue to face barriers to registration in urban areas. Individuals are unable to access the Asylum Service via Skype despite several attempts to obtain an appointment.
- In 2020, serious concerns about the quality of the procedure persist. The Asylum Service continues to issue standardised inadmissibility decisions to Syrian nationals. The overwhelming majority of Appeals Committees **uphold** these decisions, citing diplomatic assurances provided by Turkish authorities in 2016. Appeals Committees refrain from taking into consideration up-to-date, reliable information concerning risks of ill-treatment and/or do not engage with available evidence in their legal analysis.
- Detailed official **information** on the functioning of the Greek asylum procedure is no longer made publicly available. The Asylum Service has stopped publishing monthly statistical data from the end of February 2020, without justification. The Appeals Authority has never published quarterly activity reports pursuant to Article 4(3) L 4375/2016.

Reception

- Asylum seekers released from the Reception and Identification Centre of Evros are not referred to a reception facility for accommodation, and remain as unofficial residents in makeshift areas of mainland camps such as Malakasa.
- Conditions on the islands remain dire. The European Court of Human Rights has **granted** interim measures in at least ten cases concerning substandard conditions on the islands. These, however, have not been promptly complied with by the Greek authorities.

Detention

- Individuals are not informed of the reasons for their deportation and detention in a language they understand and do not benefit from legal aid to challenge their deprivation of liberty.
- Administrative courts uphold detention orders imposed on asylum seekers for reasons such as the violation of a geographical restriction or the use of false documents, despite there being no such grounds for depriving asylum seekers of their liberty in Greek legislation. During the suspension of access to asylum in March 2020, courts **failed** to assess the legality of automatically imposed detention and to examine the compliance of the authorities' decisions with national and European law.
- Administrative courts have dismissed alleged risks of exposure to inappropriate detention conditions and of contracting COVID-19 in detention as unsubstantiated, without any assessment whatsoever of the conditions prevailing in pre-removal centres.