

Statement by GREECE
Working Group on the Smuggling of Migrants Vienna,
11 and 12 July 2024
Agenda Item 3: Protection and assistance measures for smuggled
migrants

M. Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

First of all we would like to congratulate both Co-chairs upon their election and we are ready to support your works. Also we would like to thank the panelists for their insightful presentations.

It is an honor to address this esteemed forum today and share the significant strides Greece has taken to safeguard fundamental rights within our migration and asylum processes. These measures reflect our unwavering commitment to protecting human dignity and ensuring that all individuals within our borders are treated with respect and justice.

On July, 2022, Greece established the position of the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. The FRO Officer is entrusted with the vital task of collecting and preliminarily assessing complaints regarding alleged violations of fundamental rights during access to territory, reception, and asylum procedures. These complaints are then forwarded to the National Transparency Authority or the competent authorities for further investigation and action. This mechanism ensures that any third-country national who feels their rights have been infringed upon, can confidentially submit a complaint to the FRO, who operates with complete autonomy and independence.

This initiative underscores our dedication to transparency and accountability in our migration processes.

In order to further strengthen our goal for transparency and accountability, on February, 2023, we established an Independent Office within the FRO. This office, reporting directly to the Minister of Migration and Asylum, provides essential administrative support to the FRO, ensuring they can perform their duties effectively and efficiently. This development not only enhances the capacity of the FRO but also reinforces the importance we place on upholding fundamental rights.

To facilitate the submission of complaints, we have launched the Fundamental Rights Complaints Mechanism. This mechanism, available in both Greek and English, can be accessed through the Ministry of Migration and Asylum's official website. By making this platform accessible and user-friendly, we aim to empower individuals to report any violations they may encounter, thereby promoting a culture of accountability and justice.

In addition to these structural advancements, we have implemented comprehensive measures to ensure that all relevant personnel inform international protection applicants about their rights and the possibility to file a complaint with the competent authorities, such as the Hellenic Police and the FRO, whenever they report incidents of rights violations. This information is crucial, as it ensures that applicants are aware of their rights and the resources available to them.

Moreover, applicants are provided with information on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate within the local competency of each Asylum Office, and offer free legal aid and psychosocial services. These NGOs play a vital role in supporting applicants through every stage of the asylum procedure, offering legal advice, emotional support, and practical assistance.

Lastly, under the new Migration Code of Laws, we introduced a special residence permit for smuggled migrants. This permit, valid for 12 months and renewable, is issued gratis, reflecting our commitment to offering protection and support to the most vulnerable. This initiative is a testament to our dedication to providing humanitarian assistance and ensuring that those who have been exploited or trafficked receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.

These initiatives represent a comprehensive approach to protecting the fundamental rights of migrants and asylum seekers in Greece and our commitment to create a just and humane migration system.

I Thank you.