



Hellenic Republic Ministry of Migration and Asylum

GCM- 2nd Regional Review for the UNECE Region, Geneva- 11.03.2024

Speaking points

Session 1: Objectives 2 and 5

- Thank you Chair, dear colleagues.
- It is our honor to participate in the 2nd Regional Review and provide feedback for the implementation of the GCM objectives, through national legislation and policies.
- Greece has welcomed the GCM as a cooperative framework for all dimensions of international migration and is working towards the fulfillment of its objectives. This process is facilitated through the work of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum which cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Ministries in various fields of migration policy.
- We will focus today on initiatives to encourage regular migration and to promote cooperation with third countries.

1. First, on the legislative level the new Immigration Code facilitates legal migration procedures.

A recent measure allows for third country nationals, who have been living in Greece for the past three years and have been offered a valid work contract, to be provided with a residence permit for labour reasons. It is expected that the measure will benefit around 25.000 migrants by the end of the year.

2. Moreover, our policy approach aims at the conclusion of bilateral agreements on migration and mobility with third countries of interest, including provisions to facilitate mobility of workforce needed in the national labour market but also to enhance cooperation in the area of combatting trafficking and smuggling of migrants and promoting returns.

On top of the Agreements already concluded with Bangladesh and Egypt, Greece intends to conclude six more bilateral agreements.

3. Last but not least, the upgrade and digitalization of administrative procedures goes hand in hand with policy and legislative changes. Greece is reaching out to different levels of governance, from local authorities to Embassies, in order to simplify relevant procedures.

- This three steps approach is expected to unfold the potential of labour migration with a mutual beneficial impact on the national economy, the labour migrants and the country of origin.
- In collaboration with partner states, Greece participates in projects aiming to raise awareness and influence the perception and behaviour of potential and returning migrants who might consider irregular pathways to Europe.
- On international level, Greece takes part in various multilateral fora discussing migration issues, and for 2024, in the framework of its ICMPD Chairmanship, has put forward a Programme of activities revolving around promoting balanced partnerships and adopting a whole-of-route approach to migration management.

Session 2: Objectives 9, 10, 11 and 21

- **Combatting the criminal activity of smuggling networks** which put the lives of migrants at risk, is one of the priorities for Greece reflected also in the National Strategy for Integrated Border Management.

To ensure coordination the positions of National Coordinators for Returns and Smuggling were established within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum while efforts are made to improve the return process.

As migrant smuggling routes are diverse, complex and extend beyond national borders, it is necessary to shape mutually beneficial partnerships with countries of origin and transit, addressing the root causes of irregular migration, and at the same time fighting organized crime, including migrant smuggling, and trafficking in human beings.

The recent bilateral agreements of Greece on migration and mobility with specific countries of origin include cooperation with the view of preventing smuggling while promoting return and reintegration.

In this spirit, Greece supports the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling as a comprehensive common initiative for the prevention, response, protection, and alternatives to irregular migration.

- To **prevent and combat trafficking and protect migrants** existing structures were strengthened while new instruments were created.

The Office of the National Rapporteur continues to offer valuable work in this field. The National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Trafficking Victims is a useful tool. The National Emergency Response Mechanism- stands as an exemplary good practice for unaccompanied minors. It was efficiently used in the case of Ukrainian minors as well.

The prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims is expected to be reinforced through the work of a newly established General Secretariat.

- **To ensure effective returns and sustainable reintegration** the Greek authorities cooperate with IOM for the implementation of projects related to assisted voluntary return and reintegration of migrants.

In cooperation with FRONTEX it is attempted to build stronger capacity in the field of returning irregular migrants to their countries of origin and to promote sustainable return and reintegration.

Collaboration within the EU High Level Network for Returns will be enhanced.

Nevertheless, more efforts in cooperation with third countries would be necessary to ensure the fulfillment of GCM objectives.

It remains as a goal for the future to enhance international cooperation to efficiently combat migrant smuggling and promote safe and dignified returns.

Thank you for your attention.

