

Project: Strengthening NGO involvement and capacities around EU 'hotspots' developments



The EU has set up 'hotspots' to ensure registration, fingerprinting and identification of all migrants arriving at the EU borders in Italy and Greece and agreed to relocate 160.000 asylum seekers to other EU members states. In addition, the EU made a deal with Turkey to return 'irregular' migrants arriving in Greece in exchange for resettlement of Syrian refugees out of Turkey, financial support and the prospect of lifting visa restrictions and speeding up EU membership negotiations. There are many unanswered questions around the legality, function and procedures of the hotspots and the implementation of the EU Turkey deal.

Civil society organisations play an important role in providing humanitarian and other support for migrants and refugees. They are concerned about this new EU approach, the treatment and rights of migrants and the lack of (legal) assistance and information for asylum seekers. This project aims to contribute to the NGO response and involvement in the developments around the EU hotspots and to strengthen legal support and information for asylum seekers around the hotspots.

Photo: Panos Christodoulou



Moira camp (Lesvos)

The following activities will be implemented between March 2016 and June 2017:

- 1) Field research and report on the function of the hotspots in Greece and Italy. This includes the legal basis for the hotspots function, hotspots functions and procedures (such as registration, fingerprinting, access to asylum procedures, provision of interpretation services, access to legal counselling and assistance, presence and roles of NGOs / international organisations, reception facilities and use of detention, processing of asylum claims), relocation, forced and voluntary returns and institutional capacity and coordination.

- 2) Continuous monitoring of developments around the hotspots function.
- 3) Strengthening joint policy development, lobby and advocacy actions around the hotspots function, including: using the up to date information from research and monitoring for policy development and advocacy messages, connecting developments around hotspots to other EU asylum policy developments, advocating for an independent role for local NGOs in hotspots function, coordination of lobby and advocacy activities between ECRE members and other stakeholders and activities to raise awareness.
- 4) Strengthening the capacities of the Greek and Italian Councils for Refugees with regard to providing legal support as well as legal information and other support around the 'hotspots' and relocation procedures. This will be done by deploying legal counselling services around some of the hotspots and relocation facilities (Trapani, Sicily and Lesvos/Athens, Greece). As part of its International Programme, the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) will support GCR and CIR with the management and training of legal volunteers assisting the organisations' activities.

The project is a joint initiative of the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR), European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) and Italian Council for Refugees (CIR) and funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery. For more information, please contact Berend Jonker (project manager DCR): bjonker@vluchtelingenwerk.nl

