



YLVA JOHANSSON

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HOME AFFAIRS

Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels
Tel. +32-2 295 01 70
cab-johansson-contact@ec.europa.eu

Brussels, 07/12/2021
Ares S(2021)8048555

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October 2021 and for sharing your concerns and recommendations on the situation of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in Greece with regard to food provision.

Over the last few years, the European Commission has provided substantial financial support to Greece in order to improve migration management. We have supported the Greek authorities and international organisations active in the country in setting up, maintaining and improving asylum and reception services for applicants of international protection, and in developing integration programmes for beneficiaries.

The Commission has raised the issue of discontinuation of material reception support including food to protection status holders and persons with a rejected asylum claim with the Greek authorities on several occasions. We have underscored that all persons, irrespective of their status, should benefit from the provisions of EU law, notably the provisions of the Reception Conditions Directive, the Qualifications Directive and the Return Directive and from the relevant provisions of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. On this premise, the Commission has repeatedly called upon the Greek authorities to ensure all persons, particularly the vulnerable receive basic means of subsistence, notably, food and hygiene products.

In line with the relevant EU provisions on the rights of beneficiaries of international protection the Commission has also highlighted the need for sustainable integration systems, to ensure the fluid transition to the status of beneficiary of international protection. Timely access to the rights by beneficiaries upon the granting of protection, such as social benefits on a par with own nationals, is an essential element of efficient integration.

The Commission adopted this year an EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. The Action Plan encourages Member States to implement specific actions in four thematic areas crucial for successful integration, namely housing, education, health and employment. Access to adequate and affordable housing is also a key determinant for successful integration.

Mr Levani Talakhadze
Advocacy and Communications Officer
Akadimias 91-93
Athens, 10677
levani.talakhadze@hlias.org



The obligations for the Greek government towards recognised beneficiaries of international protection and the risk of homelessness, are set out in the various instruments of international human rights law vis-à-vis housing provision. For beneficiaries of international protection, EU law prescribes no obligation to provide housing per se, but Greece is required by Directive 2011/95/EU to ensure that beneficiaries of international protection have access to accommodation under equivalent conditions as other third-country nationals legally resident in the country. This translates into an obligation to facilitate such access.

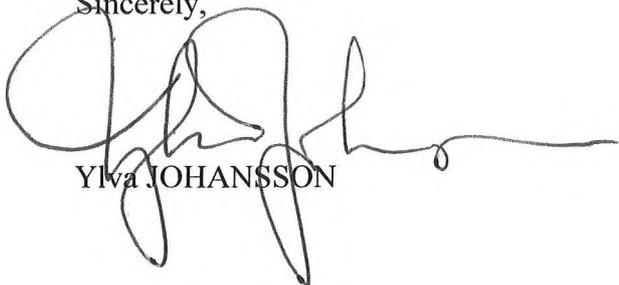
In addition, Member States also have an obligation to accommodate unaccompanied minor beneficiaries in specialised centres for minors or in other accommodation suitable for minors. They also have an obligation to ensure full compliance with the principles of the best interest of the child and of family unity and to ensure a standard of living adequate to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, including access to education and to leisure activities appropriate to their age.

The Commission remains concerned about difficulties and administrative delays in Greece which hamper access to beneficiaries' rights, as stipulated under the Qualifications Directive and is in regular communication with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the Ministry of Labour in Greece to address these impediments.

The Commission has also expressed its concerns about applicants not having access to the in-merit assessment of their asylum claim in Greece and having no possibility to be readmitted to Turkey. In line with Article 38(4) of the Asylum Procedures Directive, the Greek authorities should ensure that applicants whose applications have been declared inadmissible under the Joint Ministerial Decision and who are not being admitted to Turkey should be given access to the in-merits asylum procedure. The Commission has enquired with the Greek authorities on the steps taken towards this direction.

Civil society organisations play an important role in supporting beneficiaries and applicants of international protection and in upholding the common values and fundamental rights upon which the EU is founded. In this respect, I would like to assure you that the Commission is fully committed to the objective of providing adequate support to migrants in need of protection and of a seamless transition to sustainable integration programmes for beneficiaries of international protection. We will continue to support the Greek national authorities to manage migration in line with EU law and values.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ylva JOHANSSON', written over a printed name.

Ylva JOHANSSON

Cc: Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN, President of the European Commission
Mr Kyriakos MITSOTAKIS, Prime Minister of Greece
Mr Notis MITARAKIS, Minister of Migration and Asylum of Greece