



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
JUSTICE FREEDOM AND SECURITY

Minutes of the First Greek Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: 11 April 2009

Location: Hellenic Migration Policy Institute, Athens, Greece

Participants:

- Mr. Georgios Neratzis, Ministry of Labour, Directorate of Employment
- Mr. Dimitris Souliotis, Ministry of Education- General Secretariat of Adult Learning/ Life Long Learning Institute, Member of the Board
- Pr. Iro Stefanou – Nikolakopoulou, Greek Refugee Council, President of the Board
- Ms.Vasiliki Sfyri, Agaliazo – Volunteer Network Against Cancer, Psychologist
- Ms. Dimitra Malliou, Greek Migrants' Forum
- Mr, Joe Valencia, KASAPI/ ELLAS – Greek Union of Filipinos, journalist
- Mr. Theodoros Katsas, Hellenic Migration Policy Institute, National Coordinator
- Mr. Dimitris Parsanoglou, Hellenic Migration Policy Institute, Researcher/Sociologist
- Ms. Fyllio Avramidi, Hellenic Migration Policy Institute
- Ms. Aspasia Plakantonaki, Hellenic Migration Policy Institute

Greek Partner:



IMEPO
HELLENIC
MIGRATION POLICY
INSTITUTE

I. TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION:

- Presentation of the overall project objectives and activities
- The one-stop-shop concept, including the experience from other EU countries (ie. National Immigrant Support Centres – ACIDI in Portugal)

II. AGENDA OF THE MEETING

1. Presentation of the project
2. Presentation of the overall concept of the OSS
3. Presentation of the role of the Advisory Committee
4. Presentation of the national report
5. Transnational Workshop
6. Short-comings of immigration services in Greece
7. Current examples of models similar to the OSS in Greece
8. The nature/ characteristics of a potential OSS in Greece

III. MAIN OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The IMEPO team presented the overall project, its lead partner, its main activities as well as the overall aim and objective, to examine the possibility of the development of OSSs in the partners' countries, having as a model the Portuguese experience.
2. The IMEPO team presented the OSS, explaining that it consists of a model for the provision of integrated solutions to the problems faced by immigrant citizens, at a single point, addressing the shortcomings of widely dispersed public administration services.

The role of socio-cultural mediators was addressed, as they help guarantee a linguistic and cultural proximity with the migrants.

The short film on ACIDI's CNAIs was presented, and their way of operation was explained to the participants.
3. The IMEPO team analysed the role of the Advisory Committee to its participants, which is to promote discussion on the OSS model and its possible

applicability in the country, as well as to design, exchange and evaluate relevant good practices.

4. The researcher was introduced to the participants, who were given a copy of the National Report. They were asked to proceed to giving their feedback on its content, which could provide valuable insights for the finalisation of the report, especially for the last two sections.

The researcher outlined his main findings of the report, including current integration services provided in Greece.

5. The IMEPO team presented the content of the transnational workshop to be organised by IMEPO, with the selected theme “Examples of One-Stop Shops for provision of services to immigrants”, and the participants were informed regarding its implementation date (6 June 2008). The GCR was invited to give a presentation.
6. The participants discussed the shortcomings of immigration services in Greece, due mainly to the fact that there is a large number of institutions involved in the integration process, there is lack of cooperation amongst them, and they are located in dispersed locations. Furthermore, there is lack of information that immigrants often have regarding the different services provided and the bureaucratic procedures they need to follow, which was also expressed by the representative of the Greek Union of Filipinos and the representative of the Migrants’ Forum. Also, there is lack of awareness regarding potential benefits that they are entitled to (eg. rental subsidies, vocational training opportunities etc.).

The GRC representative also addressed the need for a decentralisation of immigration services, as they are currently based mainly in Athens and in Thessaloniki. This could be achieved through the creation of OSSs in further regions.

The representative of Agkaliazo highlighted shortcomings in the field of health, due to bureaucracy and lack of coordination.

A small discussion also followed on the need for coordination between Governmental and non-Governmental services.

7. The participants discussed the Citizen Service Centres which are currently active in Greece, and which are similar to the OSS but directed to all citizens. It was stressed, however, that the CSCs, act in many occasions as referral points for different services (eg. issuance of residence permits), and as intermediaries, in contrast with the OSS in the Portuguese context where certain governmental – non-governmental services are provided within the same establishment. In Greece, however, the CSCs have functioned successfully and it was agreed that an OSS in the Greek context might be more viable and realistic to develop if it acts as an intermediary offering access to immigrants to the respective services instead of offering them all in its premises.

The Foreigners Service Centre, operated by the Municipality of Athens, and was put forward as a good practices example that could provide the cornerstone on which an OSS could be set up in Greece.

The GCR representative proceeded to a presentation of the services offered by their organisation, in the field of legal and social support for asylum seekers and refugees. The GCR offers, in general, a wide range of services, with the exception of accommodation, which is offered only in very specific cases.

The representative of the Greek Forum of Migrants proceeded explaining the type of services that are offered by their establishment, and which include Greek language courses.

8. Through the discussion, it was argued by the participants, that one of the most important services that should be offered through a potential OSS in Greece would be information and advisory services regarding the different procedures that migrants need to follow for a range of issues, including residence and work permits, health insurance, language learning, etc. The information should be provided in many languages; according to the representative of the Migrants' Forum, the most important languages would be Albanian, Arabic, English and Russian.

The representative of the Institute of Lifelong Learning presented their activities related to Greek language and Greek history courses, as well as certification process.

The Migrants' Forum representative will present in future meetings the specific needs of migrants that could be addressed by an OSS in Greece, and the specific areas on which they need to be better informed through such a structure.

The importance of the role of ITCs was also stressed, as they would allow immigrants to out forward a query through the internet, without having to physically visit the OSS.

The participants, led by the IMEPO staff, also discussed the possibility of combining forces under the OSS structure, through the signing of MOUs etc.

As a first step, it was agreed that the OSS in the Greek context could function more easily if this has the role of an intermediary, instead of housing all relevant services within its establishment, which is something that could be achieved at a later stage.

The issue of achieving funding for such a structure was also briefly examined, and upcoming calls for proposals where the set up of an OSS could fit in, were mentioned.

The OSS could be staffed by graduates of the Greek Institute of Public Administration.

The issue of the dissemination of the knowledge on the existence of the potential OSSs and the services provided within them was also raised, but the participants concluded, that this would not pose a significant problem, as in most cases such services are made widely known through word-of-mouth.

In concluding, the participants agreed upon the necessity of a stronger cooperation and coordination among the existing integration service providers and welcomed the creation of a One-Stop-Shop as a necessity in order to deal with the multiple aspects of integration effectively.

IV. AGENDA FOR NEXT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The second National Advisory Committee Meeting will consist of a discussion on the National Report produced under the project. The presentation and commenting on the national report, will also give way to discussions on the possibility for the

establishment of an OSS in Greece, current existing similar models, provision of services by the different stakeholders and the possibilities to align their efforts, etc.

Furthermore, there will be a discussion stemming from the specific needs that immigrants have, which will be mostly tracked down by immigrants' associations and through the Migrants' Forum.

The above themes will also be addressed during the Advisory Committee meetings to follow, which include specific policy recommendations. During the last Advisory Committee meeting, planned towards the end of 2008, IMEPO will discuss and validate the IOM report.