



POLICY BRIEF No 2019/26, MAY 2019

Moria: Beyond Survival Policies & Perspectives

Alkiviadis-Rafail Kouloumargietos

Key points

The refugee crisis constituted a great challenge both for Greece and European Union. EU adopted a policy to address the crisis, which Greece followed. EU supported Greece financially, made an agreement with Turkey, a relocation mechanism operated among the Member-States temporarily and Greece adopted a decongestion policy to relieve Moria. The policy was not perfect, and its sectional inexpediency caused problems to refugees living there. The hotspot is overcrowded, partially damaged and misses infrastructures and human resources for serving the refugee needs. Many refugees feel unprotected, and some suffer from psychological problems, while human rights are insulted.

This Policy Brief makes three **main points** for the improvement of the refugees' lives in Moria and for handling the migratory pressure proposing to the Greek government the following:

- A better, faster and more efficient management of the crisis.
- The requirement from the EU to amend the EU- Turkey Statement.
- The requirement for a fair sharing responsibility mechanism from the Member-States.

Alkiviadis Kouloumargietos is an undergraduate student at the Dept. of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus. He has participated in plenty of actions concerning the refugee assistance when the migratory crisis was at its peak.



Introduction

Problem: short description and significance

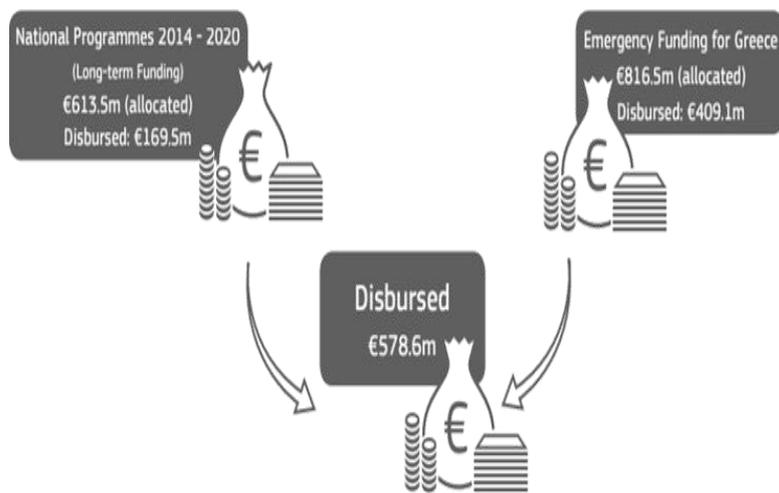
Although the migration policy was initially operative, it turned out to be insufficient. Refugee flows continue, are not being monitored effectively, the answers to asylum applications and the refugee relocations delay, the EU-Turkey Statement seems not to be observed by the Turkish side, and the reception capacities in Moria are limited. As a result, the refugees live under terrible conditions in the hotspot.

What has been done?

Financial

To support authorities managing crisis,

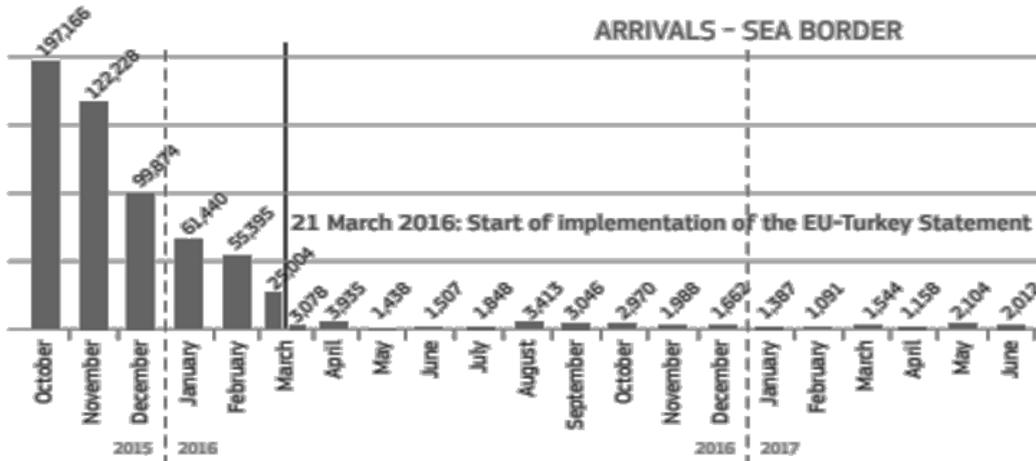
Commission allocated over €816.5 million in emergency assistance completing the 613.5 million fund that had been allocated to Greece under the national programmes for 2014-2020. However, only €578.6 million have been disbursed and used for an immediate response to the refugee crisis by providing shelter, catering, health care and transportation in the mainland to the refugees and for ensuring and enhancing access to a fair and efficient asylum process.



already

Support

Greek in the refugee European



Source: European Commission

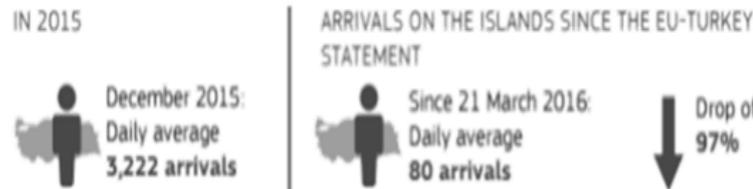
The hotspot in Moria was built after these funds

were allocated; the human

resources there are financed by these funds.

EU-Turkey Statement

In March 2016, EU Heads of States and Governments and Turkey agreed on the EU-Turkey Statement to put an end to the irregular migration flows from Turkey to the Eastern Aegean islands. This agreement could broadly be characterized as efficient considering that the arrivals diminished by 97% since the Statement became operational.



Source: European Commission

Relocation

Based on the arrival figures in 2015 the Council decided that the Member States would support Greece with the relocation of 63,302 persons in need of international protection. Almost 22,000 asylum applicants have been relocated till November 2018.

Decongestion



The Greek Government recently adopted a decongestion policy to relieve Moria. At the end of August more than 8,500 refugees lived in Moria RIC, the capacity of which is for 3,100 people. Now the number of refugees living there has decreased to 4,771.

Migration Policy Mistakes- Consequences for Moria

Core of the Problem

Some mistakes and defaults in the migration policy uncovered the insufficiency of Moria hotspot and made refugees live under inappropriate conditions. The sewage system is way too damaged; as a result, raw sewage reaches the tents and mattresses where the refugees sleep and there is great danger for the environment and public health. In addition, inside the hotspot there is one shower for every 84 persons and 72 of them are expected to share one toilet, there is only 1 doctor per work shift and the children do not have the opportunity to attend school. Moria has so limited capacity, that about 1500 people live in an olive grove next to the hotspot inside tents without electricity, water and protection from the cold. Fights and riots are a daily phenomenon; women are vulnerable and do not feel safe, while gender-based and sexual violence is common and the police security limited. The whole situation is worsening the refugees' mental health; many suffer from anxiety, attempt suicide etc.

Table: Number of refugees living in Moria

Date	Refugees	Source
31/8/2018	7,000	UNHCR
26/9/2018	8,500	IRC
3/10/2018	8,300	IRC
18/11/2018	6,800	Ministry of Citizen Protection
19/11/2018	5,900	Ministry of Citizen Protection
19/12/2018	4,800	Ministry of Citizen Protection

Causes of the Problem

The Greek

management of the migratory crisis is not as effective as expected. As mentioned, only €578.6 million have been disbursed; it is totally unacceptable that Moria is in such a situation after the allocation of the

EU funds, which raises doubts over their appropriate management. Furthermore, some



refugees live in Moria RIC more than 6 months, which means that their identification and examination of the asylum applications delay and that there are not enough hosting infrastructures in the mainland. As a result, Moria is overcrowded. Finally, despite the decongestion policy adoption, there are more to be done, so that Moria hotspot will accommodate as many people as its original capacity.

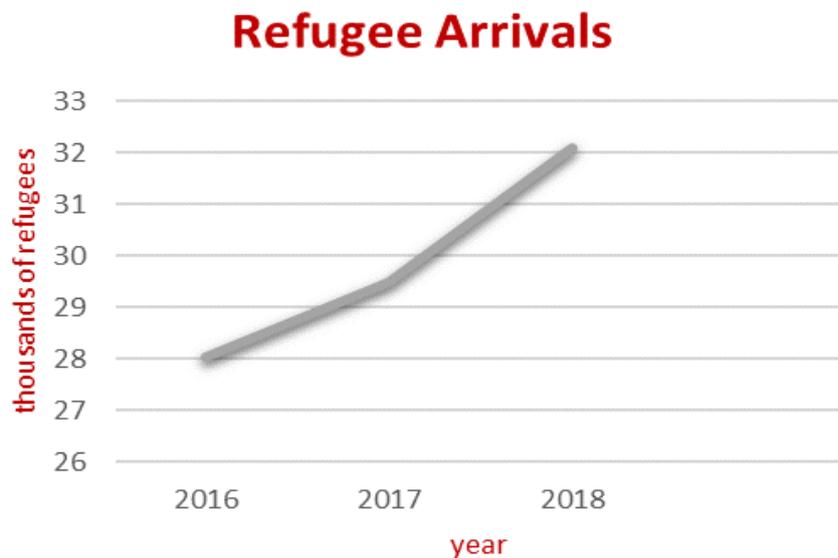
The short-sighted policies established by the EU-Turkey Statement have also played a negative role in the whole situation. Turkey has strictly required the refugees to remain on the islands until their asylum applications are answered and does not accept returns from the mainland hotspots. As a result, Greek government executes a containment policy, which in conjunction with the slow pace of returns to Turkey from the Greek islands- 2.164 since March 2016- entraps thousands of refugees inside Moria. Furthermore, Turkey seems not to comply with the Statement lately. Particularly, more than 11,000 new arrivals were highlighted on the Eastern Aegean islands during the last three months, while about 160 refugees arrived from Turkey to Lesbos from 5 to 18 November. The decongestion policy goes on but not effectively enough due to the insufficient Turkish borders supervision. From the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement on March 2016 to the end of that year there were 28,034 sea arrivals from Turkey; in 2017 29,501 sea arrivals

IRC mental health centre data

Symptoms	Percent of clients
Suicidal Ideation	60%
Anxiety/Stress	55%
Suicide attempts	29%
Aggressiveness	18%
Self-harm	15%
Psychotic symptoms	6%
PTSD	41%
Depression	64%



and 32,092 in 2018, which means that the refugee flows are more every year and the purpose of the Statement unsuccessful.



Finally, the relocation procedures have been paused. The EU Member-States are unwilling to be part of the relocation mechanism not accepting refugee relocations from Greece; therefore, only 22,000 relocations have happened. The Member-States do not comply with the article 80 TFEU and the principle of solidarity is not practically operating.





Recommendations

- At first, a **better respond to the migratory crisis by the Greek government** is recommended. The allocated funds should be better managed so that the conditions in Moria hotspot will be improved. Greek government could equip the RIC with extra doctors and police presence for the securing the refugees. Furthermore, new emergency reception facilities should be created on Lesbos and in the mainland for the incoming refugees, so that Moria will get decongested. The decongestion policy must continue faster, so that Moria will accommodate as many refugees as the appropriate capacity. Finally, asylum applications should be faster examined so that the returns to Turkey and the transportations from Moria to the mainland will be increased. This could be accomplished by reinforcing the asylum procedures with qualified operators and interpreters.
- Secondly, the Greek government should **demand the amendment of the EU-Turkey Statement**, so that the containment policy, which is opposing the human rights, will be annulled. Moreover, Greece should ask EU to make Turkey comply with the Statement for the termination of the refugee flows.
- Finally, Greek government **should claim from EU Member-States a fair sharing responsibility mechanism** according to the article 80 in order to relocate more asylum applicants from Greece. This will be accomplished only if the States increase the number of refugees, who are let to pass the borders. Besides, every Member-State must remember that for shaping the European migration and asylum policy, the interests and peculiarities of every State must be considered.

Conclusion

The migratory crisis is exerting extreme pressure to Lesbos. Greek government must work to protect the refugees and their rights, restore Lesbos, and adopt a policy planning beyond just the survival of the refugees inside a hotspot.



References

Nikolakoroulou-Stefanou, I. (2016). Οι πολιτικές Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου.
In *Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση- Δημιουργία, εξέλιξη, προοπτικές* (1st ed., pp. 460-478). Athens,
Greece: Εκδόσεις Κριτική

European Commission. (2018, December). *MANAGING MIGRATION, EU Financial Support to Greece* (Rep.). Retrieved December 23, 2018, from European Commission website: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20181219_managing-migration-eu-financial-support-to-greece_en.pdf

European Commission. (2018, April). *EU-TURKEY STATEMENT, Two years on* (Rep.). Retrieved December 24, 2018, from European Commission website: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180314_eu-turkey-two-years-on_en.pdf

European Commission. (2016, March). *ANNEX to the COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL First report on relocation and resettlement* (Rep.). Retrieved December 25, 2018, from European Commission, website: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160316/first_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_-_annex_1_en.pdf

Asylum Service. (2018, December). *Asylum Procedures from 07.06.2013 to 30.11.2018* (Rep.). Retrieved December 25, 2018, from Ministry of Migration Policy website: http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Dashboard_November.pdf

Ministry of Citizen Protection. (2018, December). (Rep.). Retrieved December 25, 2018, from Ministry of Citizen Protection website: <http://mindigital.gr/index.php/προσφυγικό-ζήτημα-refugee-crisis/3320-apatyposi-tis-ethnikis-eikonas-katastasis-gia-to-prosfygiko-metanasteftiko-zitima-tin-19-12-2018?fbclid=IwAR1imK2Eap3WYH09kzPro0kwUxRRGWnQkUsUZTzH47bRnEt7dMD4YCfs8lo>

Region of the North Aegean. (2018). *Απόφαση, η Περιφερειάρχης Βορείου Αιγαίου* (Tech.). Mytilene, Greece: Region of the North Aegean.

Refugee Support Aegean. (2018, November). *Surviving in Moria*. Retrieved December 14, 2018, from https://rsaegean.org/en/surviving-in-moria/?fbclid=IwAR3Efolm36ZXMJiEt5EdrExJcK60mOX4tWCv5HcM1mv2244NF_9uBpTXfMQ



International Rescue Committee. (2018, September). *Unprotected, Unsupported, Uncertain*(Issue brief). Retrieved December 2, 2018, from IRC website:
<https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3153/unprotectedunsupporteduncertain.pdf>

UNHCR. (2018, August). UNHCR urges Greece to address overcrowded reception centres on Aegean islands. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from
https://www.unhcr.org/gr/10526-η-γ-α-απευθύνει-επείγουσα-έκκληση-για-τη.html?fbclid=IwAR01vOhimSIW2LBdeR6XcBwfE8eFSTP_eIpTmMDA2mbF_8Nq_ydKIJhhfgc

Greek Government. (2018). *Greek Government Newspaper- Decisions* (Vol. 2nd) (Greece). Athens, Greece: Ethniko Typografio.

United Nations. (2018, November). UNHCR urges Greece to accelerate emergency measures to address conditions on Samos and Lesbos. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/11/5be15c454/unhcr-urges-greece-accelerate-emergency-measures-address-conditions-samos.html>

UNHCR. (2018, November). *Aegean Islands Weekly Snapshots*(Rep.). Retrieved December 2, 2018, from UNHCR website:
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66911>

International Organisation for Migration. (n.d.). Europe-Flow Monitoring. Retrieved December 31, 2018, from <http://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals>