

PRESS RELEASE

Tackling the accountability and fairness of admissibility interviews in Greek Hotspots

European Ombudsperson should not close inquiry into maladministration by EU asylum agency in Greek Hotspots

Berlin/Lesvos 9 September 2018 – The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) must be held to account for blatant failures in its work in the Greek Hotspots. For this reason, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights ([ECCHR](#)) requested the European Ombudsperson to review her [decision](#) to close the inquiry into maladministration by EASO in the reception centers on the Greek islands. In response to ECCHR’s [initial complaint](#) from April 2017, the Ombudsperson acknowledged serious concerns as to the fairness of admissibility interviews and the extent of EASO’s involvement therein. Nevertheless, the Ombudsperson decided not to take any steps to address the ongoing violations of fundamental rights in the Greek Hotspots.

“The interviews with applicants for international protection conducted by EASO in the Greek Hotspots take place in a vacuum of accountability that can and should be addressed by the European Ombudsperson”, said ECCHR General Secretary Wolfgang Kaleck. Elli Kriona Saranti, a Greek lawyer from the NGO HIAS Greece, which submitted an [expert opinion](#) in support of ECCHR’s complaint, added: “The need for accountability is even more pressing since EASO is now exclusively responsible for the conduct of all interviews on the island of Lesbos, including vulnerable applicants. In our experience, EASO often fails to consider vulnerability adequately.”

The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 purports to return “[a]ll new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands”. However, asylum seekers cannot be returned based on a generalized consideration of Turkey as a “safe third country” and without an individual review of the particular circumstances of the person concerned. The admissibility interviews undertaken by EASO deny asylum seekers a fair hearing.

Since 2014 ECCHR has pursued [strategic litigation to contest human rights violations at the borders of Europe](#). ECCHR is, for instance, assisting with the complaints to the ECtHR by two individuals against Spain’s push-back practice at the border in [Melilla](#). ECCHR’s work in this area is supported by [Brot für die Welt](#).

More information on the complaint against EASO: [ECCHR/Migration/Greece](#)

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